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"NOW, THEN, PRACTICE THE YELL."—*Page* 192.

# TWO BOY PUBLISHERS

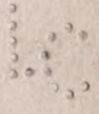
OR

## FROM TYPECASE TO EDITOR'S CHAIR

By ALLEN CHAPMAN

AUTHOR OF "THE YOUNG EXPRESS AGENT," ETC.

ILLUSTRATED



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TWO BOY PUBLISHERS.

# PREFACE

THIS volume is the second book in "The Boys of Business Series," a line in which it is my intention to tell something of the doings of bright, manly youths who start out in life with the intention of making something of themselves.

The first volume of this series was "The Young Express Agent," relating the doings of Bart Stirling, showing how he took his father's place in the office, and "won out," despite the doings of several enemies who were jealous of his rise in life.

Bart had two young friends, Bob and Darry Haven, both interested in the printing business, and in this present story I tell how the Haven Brothers became firmly established, both as job printers and as publishers of a local weekly newspaper. Many glimpses are given into a real printing office of to-day, and an idea is also given of the keen rivalry that exists in the trade, es-

pecially in a town of small size. The rivalry was not always fair and aboveboard, and how Bob and Darry occasionally suffered will be found in the pages that follow. The publishing of even a small country paper is no mean task, and the Haven boys richly deserved the success that at last crowned their untiring efforts.

ALLEN CHAPMAN.

MAY 1, 1906.

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# TWO BOY PUBLISHERS

## CHAPTER I

### PRINTERS' INK

"If we can land that job, Bob, it will mean a good deal to us."

Darry Haven spoke the words importantly. His brother Bob looked as serious and earnest as if they were two representative business men deciding the fate of all Pleasantville.

"It's a fine start if we do get that job," declared Bob. "In the first place it's a big order for such small fry as us. Then it will test just what the new press can do. Finally, it will show our mettle as up-to-date printers, and the principal point—the money—is not to be sneezed at."

The two boys stood on a side street just off the busy central thoroughfare of the town. A cindered walk led some fifty feet through the middle of a vacant lot, and up to the open doorway of a two-story unpainted structure.

The building had once been a carpenter shop. It was now used for another purpose, as told by a big white-lettered sign bearing the single word:

PRINTING.

The end of a type case showed near a window. Beyond it was a large composing stone. Shining black as to frame, and silver clear as to plate, a brand-new job press, run by foot power, faced the door and the street.

Bob wore a three-cornered cap made of manilla paper, and a long apron reaching from neck to ankles. His sleeves were rolled up to the elbow, his finger tips were daubed, and careless dark blotches of printers' ink marked his forearms.

He held in one hand a composing stick, carrying half a dozen lines of type on which he had been busy when he followed his brother outside.

In fact Bob was a perfect specimen of the junior printer in appearance. At soul he disdained to be called an amateur. He was at that moment as proud and high-spirited as the biggest publisher in the country. He felt himself neither a "sub" nor apprentice, but a full-fledged partner in Haven Brothers.

Darry looked "the outside man" complete. He was neatly dressed, and he suggested business strict and prompt in every expression of his fine open face, and every move of his well-knit frame.

He consulted some memoranda on a card in his hand.

"Yes," remarked Darry, "twenty thousand impressions is a banner run for us."

"Oh, we can handle it all right, if we can get it," observed the dauntless Bob. "The Novelty Works people use a lot of printed matter. If we please them on this job, our fortune's made."

"Not exactly, and not quite just yet," replied Darry with an indulgent smile. "But, as you say, it will be a magnificent start. Well, we'll soon know our fate, Bob."

"Going up to the Novelty Works now?"

"Yes, Mr. Dawes opens the bids and decides at four o'clock. I don't see how we can miss it," said Darry, but a little anxiously. "We can afford to bid lower than anyone else. Our only rival is the Pleasantville *Eagle* Job Print, and they are a high-priced concern."

"Not always," dissented Bob. "That fellow,

Hemp Carson, the manager, has been hustling actively for business of late. He would think nothing of losing five, or ten, or even fifty dollars to knock us out."

"You over-estimate our importance, Bob."

"I don't!" retorted Bob staunchly. "Carson knows we are in earnest, and he's a small caliber man. You laughed at me last night, but if the fellow who was sneaking around here and peeking through the windows when we moved our stuff in here was n't Hemp Carson, I'll eat my hat!"

"Perhaps he is naturally a little curious."

"That isn't his vice—meanness is. The expressman's boy told me this morning that Carson intercepted his father after the moving was done last night. He took him over to the Sharp Corner. He treated him, and pumped him all kinds of ways to find out what type we had, how many rollers, if the proof press was a new one, and if we had left school for good to go into this business."

"Well," said Darry, dismissing the subject with a determined pressure of his lips, "we have left school for good, Bob, and invested all we can scrape together to float this business. Don't

forget that Haven Brothers is no frolic, but an up and down, make or break, bread and butter proposition."

"Certainly," said Bob with a solemn motion of his head. "Well," he added, making back for the office, "it won't be break if hard work can stop it!"

"Pluck clear through—you look good, Bob!" rallied Darry, waving his partner and brother a cheery adieu and proceeding briskly down the street.

Darry experienced all the anxiety of a person just going into business and risking his all on an experiment. Still, his face was bright and eager.

He could look back to a record crystal-clear, and pure and noble ambitions beckoned ahead.

There were many pleasant things to think of in the career that had culminated the day previous in the Haven boys graduating from amateurs into a real firm of printers.

Darry's heart had beat very proudly that morning, when, after getting everything in order at the new office, he looked around at the

neat and perfect little printing plant that he and Bob could call their own.

The Havens had lived in Pleasantville for a good many years. Mr. George Haven, the father, had once been a city editor. His health had broken down, however, and he had not been able to do much work since Darry, the oldest boy, was twelve years of age.

Mrs. Haven was a refined, educated lady. She had the artistic impulse in a marked way, and had worked into quite a business doing fashion illustrating for some city publishers.

In the meantime, Darry and Bob had been of no little service in helping the family. They were naturally handy, accommodating boys, and sought out all kinds of odd chores around the town from storekeepers and others.

It was surprising how a little start in saving encouraged them to further industrious striving, and about a year before the present time they had acquired the nucleus of the printing enterprise.

They picked up several old fonts of type at a bargain, later got a small press outfit, and, using

the woodshed for a shop, began printing cards for their school friends, and cheap dodgers for the smaller local shopkeepers.

Then "great luck," as Bob phrased it, came their way. Their loyal friend, Bart Stirling, succeeded to his father's position as express agent for the B. & M. railroad at Pleasantville.

The office was short-handed. There was considerable extra delivering of small parcels to do, and the Haven boys got the work. Then Bart Stirling threw some office printing their way, encouraging them vastly.

Their embryo strivings grew rapidly into a great ambition. They had but one idea: to buy a regular printing outfit and open a regular printing office. The enthusiastic Bob cherished the fond hope that some day they might show the old timers how to get out a real, live newspaper.

They had stood by Bart Stirling through all his troubles, and they had been many, although Bart had come out winner.

"If you start a newspaper here, count me your first subscriber," Bart had said to them, when, as a reward for his services the express company gave

him a position as assistant manager in an office in a near-by city, as already related in another volume of this series entitled: "The Young Express Agent."

Bart had been a valued friend and adviser, and the boys felt pretty lonesome after his departure for Rockport.

However, they corresponded regularly with him. Besides, at least twice a month Bart ran down to Pleasantville on a brief home visit over Sunday. Many a Saturday Bart had given them till midnight going over their plans.

When Darry went to the city to buy the new printing press, it was Bart Stirling who took him around to the supply houses and got him all the best discounts.

The Haven boys had a long final talk with their parents, and Bart was present and aided a decision with his advice and coöperation.

It was settled that Darry and Bob should give up school, and start in earnest in the printing business.

Mr. Haven could help some, if their enterprise ever ran into the publishing line, and the gifted pencil of the mother was also at their service.

They needed quarters near the town business center, and here again kind fortune favored them.

An expensive office in the main street business block was out of the question. A man working as porter at the town hotel generously helped them out of their dilemma.

This was Baker Mills, a queer roving character, who owed to Bart Stirling all that he was.

Mills had at one time gotten into the bad graces of Colonel Harrington, the wealthy magnate of Pleasantville. The latter had stooped to a plot to banish or imprison the poor fellow, who was an obstacle in his path.

Through Bart, the man Baker Mills had been enabled to defy and then force the treacherous Harrington to a compromise, and Mills had become a fixture at Pleasantville.

One night, during a fire, he courageously saved the life of a grandchild of an old resident.

This person owned the old carpenter shop on the side street. It had not been used for a year. Mills wanted to assist Bart's young friends.

It was a happy moment for the ambitious young printers when Mills brought them permission to

use the old shop at their pleasure for two years, at a merely nominal rent.

It was a happier one, the evening previous, when, after renovating the old shell, Haven Brothers looked around the neatly fitted up printing office with all the joy and hopefulness of snugly-housed proprietors.

The week before, the bookkeeper at the Novelty Works located at the edge of the town had mentioned to Darry that they were in the market for twenty thousand circulars.

Heretofore, the Pleasantville *Eagle* Job Print had practically monopolized the local printing situation.

Darry had put in a bid, and as he went along now to receive the decision on the same he was naturally eager and anxious.

It was the most pretentious contract they had as yet undertaken, and if the job was awarded to them and satisfactorily done, it would certainly entitle them to a standing in the community as persons of business.

Darry's heart beat a trifle faster as he came in sight of the long brick building where the Pleas-

antville Novelty Works employed some fifty hands, manufacturing light hardware novelties.

The front portion of the factory was two stories high. The second floor comprised the offices of the concern.

Darry pulled down his cuffs trimly, and put on his best business look and gait. Then, suddenly, he halted at a sharp hail.

"Hello, Haven! Coming up here? No use, I'm camped right on the spot, and I'm going to get the job if I have to take it for nothing."

The words were called from an open window on the office floor. Sprawling there indolently was the speaker, the business rival of Haven Brothers—big, overgrown Hemp Carson, manager of the Pleasantville *Eagle* Job Print.

## CHAPTER II

### MAKING A START

DARRY HAVEN was a good deal annoyed at the coarse, insolent call of the enemy already within the camp.

Hemp Carson's bold proclamation was a sneer and a challenge, backing up one of his customary bluffs.

Darry, however, was politic enough to nod and bow sweetly to his rival.

He also had the nerve to proceed calmly up to the office entrance. Darry was determined to join the besieger and stand his ground, if it took all day.

A narrow flight of steps ran up to the office landing. Just as Darry pushed open the outside door there was a sharp infantile cry.

He looked up quickly as a dull bump succeeded. A neatly-dressed child of about two years, playing about the office, had unwittingly backed to the

unguarded landing. The youngster was now coming down the stairs turning back somersaults.

The velocity of the descending body was rapid, and the chances of dangerous bruises or a broken limb extremely sure.

Darry shot just one glance over the situation. Then he made a spring forward and upward, throwing himself flat.

Poised like an expert ball player headed for goal, he threw his arms above his head. Darry touched the whirling child less than four steps descended.

He then slid a few inches with the rescued infant in his grasp, checked one foot, arose, and faced new screams, and fluttering, agitated womankind on the landing.

"Oh, dear! is he killed?" panted a nice-looking lady of about thirty.

"Not at all," answered Darry promptly, with a reassuring smile.

He turned over the kicking, screaming child to its mother. She hugged it, carrying it into the office kissing it and cooing over it hysterically.

Darry followed her a step or two into the room. She turned towards him.

"Oh, how shall I thank you!" she said. "He would have been killed if you had not stopped him."

"Oh, I think not," answered Darry lightly. "But I am glad I happened along just in time."

"Humph!"

Darry drew up the corners of his mouth quizzically as he traced the grunt to its source.

Big, fat Hemp Carson, sprawling in the chair by the window, was regarding him disgustedly.

The manager of the Pleasantville *Eagle* Job Print was entrenched behind a damp circle of tobacco juice which he had bestowed on the floor liberally.

As she passed by him, the lady with the child in her arms drew her dainty skirts aside to evade contamination. She gave Carson a look that would have stunned the sensibilities of the average gentleman.

Hemp only grinned. Then he turned his gaze on Darry, a savage gleam in his eyes. The youth was leisurely flecking the dirt from his coat where it had come in contact with the dusty stairs.

"Humph!" again muttered his rival—"the hero act, eh!"

"That so?" chirped Darry softly—"give me a write up, then, won't you, Carson? Put in some of the fine touches you got into that burglary of the bank last week. Of course it turned out to be a glazier fixing a broken sash, but it was a sensation—and a scoop!"

Hemp Carson colored like a beet. The bank burglary was an impulsive stroke of genius on his individual part that had made the *Eagle* a laughing-stock for a week.

"That's all right," he said, with a bluster of braggadocio. "The papers sold."

"Yes, but how many times can you 'sell' the long-suffering public?" intimated Darry.

The husky Hemp was getting as good as he sent. His humor took a sullen turn, and he scowled darkly at Darry. Then he observed condescendingly:

"Well, run on, little boy! It'll be dark soon. As I previously informed you, I'm here on the spot, which means I've cornered the job. Kitty at the rathole every time for me! and you're too late. See? Hemp is on hand."

"I see you are," observed Darry—"you

usually announce yourself with your card," and the youth pointed the allusion with a glance at the semicircle of tobacco juice. Hemp Carson growled, grew purple and subsided.

Just then the little child, freed from its mother's arms, came toddling over to Darry, extending a clothes brush which the lady had taken from a table.

"Nice man!" lisped the little one. "Kiss 'oo."

Darry gave the child a toss that delighted it, and with a courteous bow to the lady made use of the brush.

"Nacky man!" added the child, making a circle as it avoided the sprawling Hemp and his tobacco entrenchment. "Big foot make Cyril fall downstairs."

The lady darted dagger glances at Carson. Darry wondered who she could be. Like themselves, she seemed to be waiting for Mr. Dawes.

Then as the owner of the factory came out from his private office, smiling at the lady and patting the child on the head, Darry guessed that she was his wife,—and was glad of it.

Mr. Dawes was a quick, nervous man absorbed

in his business. He held some papers in his hand, and Darry recognized among them the bid of Haven Brothers on the twenty thousand circular job.

"You're the *Eagle* man?" said John Dawes, to Carson.

"That's me—manager."

"I remember you, young man," continued John Dawes, giving Darry a slight nod. "Well, gentlemen, I suppose you want a decision on the circulars. Your bid was thirty-seven dollars and fifty cents," he added to Darry.

"Yes, sir."

"Yours was fifty dollars," continued Dawes to Carson.

"Mistake," mumbled Hemp, a little embarrassed—"error of our accountant in the original estimate. We changed it this morning."

"I see you did," said Dawes waving a slip of paper, with a queer, critical glance at Carson—"to thirty-seven fifty."

"What's that!" exclaimed Darry irresistibly, taking an impulsive step forward.

Mr. Dawes shrugged his shoulders and Carson

giggled. Each knew what was passing in the mind of the other. Darry had grown quite white about the lips.

"I want to say," the youth remarked as calmly as he could, but with resolute emphasis, "that this is a singular proceeding. How did you know what our bid was?" he challenged Carson, and appealing to Mr. Dawes, "is it fair to receive a second bid from the same person—under these circumstances?"

"All's fair in love and business!" observed Carson with an attempt at a laugh.

"Not when it covers a trick!" asserted Darry stormily. "You are acting in an underhanded way, Mr. Carson, and I shall stand on my rights. Mr. Dawes, you are looking for the lowest bidder?"

"Of course."

"I claim to be the lowest bidder."

The factory owner hesitated. He had done business with the *Eagle* people for a long time. His eyes told eloquent stories, however, as they wandered from the coarse, overfed bully to the manly, erect business lad whose ingenuous face was as clear as crystal.

"Beg pardon—a telephone call," he said, as a bell rang in his private office.

Darry continued to glance severely at Carson. The latter dared not face him, but, feigning nonchalance, got up and walked across the room.

Darry observed that the lady with the little boy had been an interested auditor to the discussion just ended.

He saw her now arise, and with the child go into the private office. As the telephone talk there ended, he caught the low hum of the voices of man and wife.

Mr. Dawes finally came out alone. He walked straight up to Darry, and there was a new light of interest in his eyes as he said:

"I shall give this job to Haven Brothers."

"What's that!" cried Hemp Carson, facing around with a start.

"Yes," said the factory owner—"their bid is the lowest."

"We bid the same, did n't we?"

"You mean thirty-seven dollars and fifty cents?"

"Yes."

"How did you know that was their bid?"

"We—we found it out."

"Then you admit it was not a mistake?" pressed John Dawes—"but a plan to get the work at any figure. I don't like this subterfuge. Further, this young man agrees to put a border around the circular."

"That was n't in the specifications!" cried Hemp.

"No, I make that addition voluntarily," explained Darry. "We desire to make a record on this job, Mr. Dawes, and the border makes an improvement that is an advertisement for us."

"I see," nodded Mr. Dawes.

"We 'll put a border on, too," fumed Hemp, getting excited.

"I shall award the job—"

"In colors!" shouted Hemp desperately.

"Here is the copy, Mr. Haven," said the factory owner quietly. "When can we have the circulars?"

"Thursday noon."

"Very good."

"Hold on!"

Hemp Carson woke up actively. He flounced around in a tumult, Mr. Dawes looked inquiring.

"Are you going to give that kid the job?" demanded Hemp.

"He has it already."

"Against the *Eagle*, with its big equipment, steam presses, its—its prestige and its—its power!"

"Is that a threat?" asked John Dawes with a faint smile.

"Those kids have a one-horse old junk shop in a barn!"

"I don't care what they have, or where they have it, as long as they carry out the contract and do the work acceptably." The gentleman turned to Darry. "You shall have a check on delivery, and—" with a glance at his child, who had come to the doorway—"thank you, young man, thank you!"

Darry bowed at this recognition of his services in behalf of the child.

Hemp Carson with a sullen face and muttered ejaculations of spite and venom was stumping down the stairs.

Darry seemed to tread air as he came out into

the bright sunshine, buttoning up his coat over the copy of the first big job that had come to Haven Brothers.

Carson had planted himself against the door-post below. He helped himself to a new quid of tobacco as he fixed a vicious eye on Darry.

"Think you 've got us, don't you?" he sneered.

"I know we have got the job," answered Darry clearly.

"It may cost you more than you think before it 's delivered," muttered Carson darkly. "Next one comes along I'll be up at daylight ahead of you."

"Then you'll find us on deck at midnight," assured Darry buoyantly.

"Next time I'll have a load of specimens on hand that will blot you clean out of existence!"

"All right," nodded Darry, "There 's something else you want to bring along, too, Carson."

"Is there?" mumbled Hemp suspiciously.

"Yes—a cuspidor. Good day, Mr. Carson.

"Bah!" snarled Hemp.

"Boo!" retorted Darry Haven, with a merry laugh.

## CHAPTER III

### HEMP CARSON'S REVENGE

HEMP CARSON went back to the office of the *Eagle* Job Print in a savage state of mind.

He had met with a severe rebuff in his course of crooked tactics. With his perverse character there was no bridge between disappointment and revenge. He nursed some very bitter and wicked feelings towards Darry and Bob Haven.

On his way Hemp called at a customer's store. He had had an appointment here for earlier in the afternoon, but had neglected to keep it in his ardor to capture the Novelty Works job.

"Mr. Green waited for you for an hour," explained the clerk. "He had to catch a train for the city."

"Did he leave the copy for the dodgers?" asked Carson.

"No, he said he guessed as it was getting late

in the month he would let the advertising go over until next season."

"Humph!" growled Hemp for the third time that day, and now more disgustedly than ever.

Things were going wrong with Hemp. When he got to the office, the publisher called him into his private room.

He questioned Carson pointedly about some stationery office supplies furnished to the Pickle Works the week previous.

No direct charges of criticism were intimated, but the publisher's manner was strained and severe. His manager left his presence feeling decidedly uneasy.

"The old man is onto me, or suspects something!" muttered Hemp. If that clerk up at the Pickle Works has been giving me away, it means the stopping of my graft."

Hemp Carson had been making commission rebates and "divvies on the side" ever since he started in with the *Eagle* people. He wondered if his ambitious career was about to sustain a check.

"I'll have to keep a wary eye out," he solilo-

quized. "I'll have to rush in some orders to get the old man in good humor, and I'll work and worry him over this Haven deal to distract his mind. Drat those kids, anyhow! They've trimmed me good and proper to-day, but I'll get even—I'll get even!"

Carson strolled into the press room. The weekly paper had been run off the afternoon previous, and the place was deserted except for the apprentice.

They called this urchin "Stet." In the first place his name was Stetson, and it suited as an abbreviation.

Further, Stet is a proofreader's phrase meaning "leave stand" or "same as before," and Carson had thought it profoundly smart to dub the boy thus, averring that the underling he cuffed and bullied at pleasure was the same yesterday, to-day and forever as to uselessness, indolence and diminutivenes.

Stet had not grown an inch in five years. He was seventeen and looked twelve, and had a thin elfish face and cunning twinkling eyes.

He was mortally afraid of Hemp Carson, and

was his slavey because the manager had given him his job there. Carson had borrowed a week's salary as "commission." He had never paid it back.

Stet had once been unfortunate enough to "pi" a page of type, that is, mix it up. The publisher never found out the culprit. Hemp knew, however, and held the knowledge as a perpetual club over his miserable underling, representing the damage at fifty dollars.

Stet was washing a page of type with gasoline. Carson sprawled out on a pile of printing paper, lighting his pipe.

After a while he hailed the apprentice:

"Hi, Stet!"

The apprentice shuffled up to his tyrant master, but keeping out of range.

"Got any change?" inquired Carson.

"No sir."

"Then get some."

"Yes sir."

"And go over to the hotel and buy me a couple of bottles of beer."

"The boss says he won't have no more such stuff brought in here," announced Stet awkwardly.

"Never you mind. Get out so he don't see you, and get that beer in a jiffy, or I'll find some one who will. See?"

Stet tucked his dirty apron in at the waist, put on a cap, and made an exit by a back stairs, returning in about ten minutes with a package wrapped in a newspaper.

Carson lolled and drank for the next hour, and saturated himself with tobacco. Finally he waddled to his feet like some overgrown pig.

"I say, Stet," he observed, "you struck it right about the Haven boys bid on that Novelty Works job."

"Yes, sir—I heard 'em say what it was."

"Where?"

"Up at the carpenter shop."

"Was you there?"

"Yes, I was. But they did n't see me."

"How was that?"

"I knew they'd suspect and keep mum if anybody from the *Eagle* was nosing about. I was thinking about busting in a window after dark and getting at their papers to find out what you wanted to know, but they lock up like a bank.

You 'd think that new press of theirs was gold, the way they watch it. You see, the time you borrowed my salary—"

"What! " roared Carson.

"I mean when I lost it—"

"That 's better. "

"The folks raised a row and I 'bummed' for a week—in the loft of the old carpenter shop. "

"Where the printing office is now? "

"Yes. Last night, when they were moving in their traps, I sneaked to the side of the shop. There some cleats run up the clapboards to the big door upstairs where they used to lift timber in. The Havens don't use the upstairs part, where I slept when I did n't go home that week. I lay down on the floor last night, and peeked and listened. That 's how I heard about the bid. When I got out I let the inside hook drop into the staple. The door fits loose, and all you 've got to do to get in is to shove a pencil through the crack and lift up the hook. "

"I see," said Carson thoughtfully, and a minute later he left the room.

"Yah! " iterated Stet, the minute the man was

out of sight and hearing. "You 're a good one, you are—yah! yah! yah!"

Stet drew from under a shelf a big sheet of paper. It was a work of art he had constructed that afternoon, and comprised a cartoon caricature of the unpopular manager on which the compositors and the pressman had passed many a joke when exhibited.

Stet flung it to the floor and proceeded to kick it. Then he danced it to pieces.

"Some day," he announced, finally out of breath and looking tragic—"some day that's the way I'll do to Hemp Carson!"

It was just dark when Hemp Carson appeared in action again. He proceeded, via an alleyway, to the side street where Haven Brothers had their printing shop.

The shop was dark and locked, and making sure that no one was about, Carson ascended the cleats Stet had described, opened the door, closed it after him, and groped his way across the bare loft to a stairway.

Downstairs he cautiously flared a match. Newness, neatness and order prevailed everywhere.

The contrast to his own begrimed, disorganized printing quarters nettled and nerved him to go on with his nefarious task.

A series of match illuminations enabled him to examine press, composing stone and galleys.

"This is it," he muttered, bending over a chase in which a job in display type showed, neatly locked up ready to be fitted to the press. "Yes, it's made ready and proved."

The proof, a scrap of paper, lay by the side of the chase.

Carson took up a hammer and chisel and proceeded to unlock the chase. Then, with a pair of printer's nippers which he carried in his pocket, he removed certain pieces of type.

He went to a row of type cases and picked out other letters, inserted them in the vacant spaces he had made, and restored the chase to its original condition.

He had groped his way upstairs again and descended to the ground, when he heard footsteps on the cindered path leading to the street. He ventured to take a peep around the corner of the building.

"Hello! anybody around that belongs here?" instantly challenged the voice of someone, evidently just arrived at the front door.

Hemp Carson did not reply, but took to his heels down the alley, through a vacant lot and into the main street,

"Bart Stirling!" he panted, as he mixed with the crowd. It would n't do for him to see me. Well, my gay young friends," he continued, apostrophizing the absent Darry and Bob Haven, "I've spiked your guns all right. I reckon you 'll find it hard to buck up against Hemp Carson. Slick work does it, and to-night's job is only my starter."

## CHAPTER IV

### THE MYSTERIOUS STRANGER

If Hemp Carson had made his surreptitious visit to the printing establishment of Haven Brothers half an hour earlier, he would have met the junior partner of that ambitious firm just leaving for the day.

Bob Haven had put in the happiest afternoon of his life. If Darry trod on air when he got the Novelty Works job, his enthusiastic brother seemed to don wings when the good news was imparted to him.

The little printing shop appeared to be full of dazzling sunshine, and Bob went around singing and whistling like a lark.

Bob was the office major domo, compositor, proofreader, pressman and foreman. He was the most expert of the two as to mechanical detail.

It had been agreed that he should have charge of the printing arrangements.

Darry, with the affected nonchalance of a successful publisher, handed his brother the copy of the big job.

Bob, assuming the importance of a foreman rushed to death with orders, indifferently stuck the sheet of paper on the copy hook with the sumptuous remark that "it would have to take its turn."

The minute Darry went out on the hunt for new business, however, Bob broke loose.

He set the copy conspicuously on the type case, and took up his composing stick in a joyous and confident way.

The circular matter was quite brief. His nimble fingers soon set in proper place the straight matter composing the body of the circular.

Top and bottom lines, however, required some display effect. Bob had a wide selection. He tried half a dozen different styles of type, and finally settled on a combination that was neat, tasteful and striking.

Bob was an artist. He could not forbear running in some arabesque "curliques" down one side of the matter. Then in the upper left hand corner he worked in a delicate cut of a flying bird, presumably bringing the circular to the recipient.

He inclosed it all in a neat border, rolled the type with ink, and took a flat proof. He corrected an inverted comma, adjusted the lines in balance, locked up the job in a chase, and took a final proof.

"It's a dandy, that's what it is!" declared Bob exuberantly. "The *Eagle* could n't begin to approach it. That new clear type sticks out like embossed work. Now for the paper."

The boys had bought an elegant paper cutter, worked by weight pressure.

Bob estimated how many times a sheet of forty-four by thirty-two would cut to the circular size, and counted out the requisite supply.

It was a good deal of delight to set the holder on the paper, touch the lever, and see the keen bright blade sever the sheets true to the center, and shaving through like a razor.

Bob had just piled up the sheets by the side of the press, when he had visitors.

Bart Stirling's sisters dropped in to view the new plant, and brought with them a girl friend from Rockport.

Bob passed a proud and entrancing half hour conducting them about the place and explaining the uses of the various articles of equipment.

He showed Bertha Stirling how they set the type in "the cute little steel box," and he let her sister move the ponderous cushioned roller along the proof press over a card he set up for her bearing her own name.

The girls went off with their heads full of "pi," "quads," "pica," "long primer," "small caps" and other typographical technicalities. They assured Bob that they would certainly direct lady friends needing cards and sociable or concert tickets and programmes to the establishment of Haven Brothers.

Bob swept, dusted, set everything in apple pie order, and locked up for the night just at dusk.

"I wish it was morning," he declared. "I'm

going to try a lightning run on those twenty thousand impressions."

Bob went homeward filled with very pleasant thoughts. It looked like clear sailing ahead. Everything they had at the office was paid for, and their first job would give a clear profit. They certainly had a clean-cut business start.

Some boys over on the common were having a good time, but Bob took a familiar detour to evade the coterie.

"I'm a business man now," he said with a smile. "Got to keep up my dignity till I'm independent."

Bent on a short cut homewards, he turned down a mud road not much used. It was lined with brush and trees.

Suddenly Bob half paused at a snap and a flare. Someone struck a match. It was a boy about his own age, some twenty feet away. He was a stranger to Bob, and he was lighting a cigarette, shielding himself from the wind against a tree.

Every time he puffed, the match flared up and Bob got an interesting view of his features and attire.

He was a "loud" boy, from his natty derby, conspicuous tie and tailor cut big check suit down to his glossy patent leathers.

His face was not exactly a bad one, but it bore a certain expression of shrewdness and age that proclaimed the city boy of advanced ideas.

In his hand he had a small satchel. Bob had no excuse to linger. He walked on unnoticed by the stranger, and wondering who he was.

A broken fence blocked the road half-cut through. This inclosed what was known as Parker's Pasture.

The spot was an eighty-acre patch, mostly barren, but where in verdure holding high, scrawny nettle bushes.

A few stray cattle occasionally browsed about the place, but the ground was broken and rolling, and the village boys did not much frequent it.

About its center was the ruins of what looked like a well shelter. It was not so, in fact—at least not a water well.

Pleasantville had on one occasion had its oil excitement. Some speculators had "prospected,"

and had induced old Adam Parker to invest fifteen hundred dollars in their services as expert drillers.

They had bored a big hole in the ground, collected their fees promptly, and one night decamped.

All old Parker had to show for his investment was a dry deep hole. He was put to further expense by the town authorities. They compelled him to erect the board barrier around the well to prevent stray cattle or careless humanity from falling in.

Bob climbed over the four-rail fence, stopped abruptly, looked back and listened.

He heard two sharp whistles from two different points of the compass.

Then there was a shout, and with a good deal of astonishment he noted a figure come flying down the road he had just traversed.

As it approached at cyclone speed, Bob recognized the strange boy he had observed lighting the cigarette.

The youth forged ahead like an expert runner. Bob was about to shout a warning to him, for it

looked as though he would run directly into the fence.

Five feet away from it, however, the runner lifted from the ground as though set on springs.

His body described a magnificent semicircle. He cleared the fence with ease, and landed solidly.

Never pausing, the stranger continued his dash on the other side, rustled in among the woods and dimly vanished.

Bob caught his breath in an admiring glow.

"That was clever," he applauded. "Hello, in trouble?"

Just then Bob heard a distant but quickly suppressed cry. It was one of suddenness and pain.

He ran forward on the course just taken by the strange boy, a broken track in the dry woods guiding him.

"What's up?" he questioned, checking himself just in time to prevent tumbling over a half-prostrate form.

"Eh? Who are you"—began the stranger, and sat up with a quiver of agitation as there was

some more whistling near by. "A boy?" he added, trying to make out Bob more closely.

He panted as he spoke, and one hand was pressed on a knee as if he was in intense pain there.

"Hurt?" asked Bob.

"No—Yes—don't mind that. Say, will you do something for me?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Are you square?" hurried on the stranger. "Don't wait! hurry—"

He bent his ear excitedly. The echo of gruff voices reached them.

"Hurry? What for?" asked Bob.

"Run—don't stay here! Take this."

The speaker lifted from the ground the little satchel Bob had seen before.

He pressed it up into Bob's hand.

"What's this?" began Bob.

"Nothing to hurt you—or anybody else. It's mine. Can you keep a promise?"

"I sometimes try to," observed Bob dryly.

"Do it now. I want you to promise you'll run with that for your life."

"Why—"

"Hear that?" cried the boy in a frantic way, as the voices sounded still nearer. Two men—dangerous men. Run—with the satchel!"

"Where?"

"Anywhere—only hide it, destroy it!"

"What!"

"Yes—burn it up, sink it, only get rid of it! They're coming! Don't wait an instant now Remember your promise—destroy it!"

The speaker acted so frenzied that Bob caught the infection of his urgency.

He darted across the open space. He was thinking all kinds of thoughts about the mysterious episode of the moment, when he came to a halt.

He was just beside the old well. Bob backed to its protecting timbers. Coming towards him along two sides of a focussing angle, were two men.

"There he is!" panted one hurried voice.

"Hey! Wait!" shouted the other to Bob.

"Somebody after that boy," reflected the young printer. "Well, they won't hurt me."

Then he recalled his tacit promise about the satchel.

"Are they after that?" murmured Bob. "The stranger said get rid of it."

The two men arrived at the well at the same moment. They made an eager pounce towards Bob.

The latter put one hand behind him, the hand that held the little satchel.

"He said burn it, destroy it, sink it," reflected Bob hurriedly. "I promised—so—"

Bob had thrust his hand way back between the timbers. He was familiar with what yawned below.

"Here goes!" he said.

He unclasped his fingers and let the satchel drop down the three hundred feet hole in the middle of Parker's Pasture.

## CHAPTER V

### A TRICK OF THE ENEMY

One of the men grabbed Bob and pulled him away from the well. The other also grasped the youth, and it was well that Bob had disposed of the satchel. Had he not done so they would certainly have discovered it as they hustled him about.

"Give up that—"

"Hold on! it isn't him! Get along out of here, you!"

"All right," said Bob accommodatingly, and following the impetus of a disappointed shove he started away from the spot.

"He isn't the same build—some fellow belonging here," Bob heard one of the men say.

"Where did the other disappear to so suddenly, then?"

Bob felt he had no further business there. His presence might complicate the situation.

He went home, and Darry and the whole family were so full of the business incidents of the day, that the memory of the strange boy and the mysterious satchel drifted somewhat out of his mind.

Bob recalled it the next morning, however, as he started for work. He did not take his regular course to the office. Some impulse of interest made him go by way of Parker's Pasture.

When he came to the well, he cast a curious glance at the old framework.

"The satchel is sunk right enough," said Bob, viewing the broad open mouth of the hole. "They say it is three hundred feet down, and half full of water."

Bob located the patch of weeds where he had been given the commission by the strange boy.

The broken, crushed nettle bushes showed where he and the other had penetrated this miniature jungle.

"Hello!" ejaculated Bob, coming to a halt just at the spot where the strange youth had accosted him the night previous.

Bob had fancied that the latter had stumbled

and fallen while running and hurt himself, judging from his tone and manner.

Now he was enlightened as to how badly. An old scythe lay on the ground where the stranger had fallen. Its blade was red in spots, and so was the ground about it.

"He was a plucky one," commented Bob. "He must have run into the scythe, full tilt. It tripped him, and must have cut him terribly. He couldn't run any further, but he didn't let on to me. Those men were after him, of course. They wanted that satchel. He was bound they shouldn't have it. Did they find him finally, I wonder?"

Bob did not believe so, after a little investigation. He traced a break in the weeds clear to the fence.

It seemed to have been made by one person, and that person the strange boy escaping from the field, for telltale splotches of red stained the bushes.

Bob lost the trail where the road began. There was nothing further to learn, but he was curious to know what had finally become of the wounded youth.

"Why," he ruminated, as he proceeded on his way to the office, "wouldn't this make quite a sensation for a newspaper! If the old *Eagle* had it they'd get out a double extra: 'The Mystery of Parker's Pasture! The Telltale Blood Stains,' *etcetera, etcetera.* Hemp Carson would work in some old fake cuts and set the town wild. I wish we were running a newspaper!" sighed the imaginative young typo longingly. "Maybe we will, some day."

Bob got to the office and opened windows and doors, letting in the bright sunshine and fresh balmy air.

He put the Novelty Works job on the press in a jiffy, and started at work.

The splendid little machine moved smoothly and true, its even, musical click being inspiring to the ears of its ardent operator.

"It works like a charm," commented the satisfied Bob. "That printing stands out like copperplate on marble."

Bob had run off some five hundred sheets, when there was a visitor.

Baker Mills, porter at the local hotel, obtruded

his pleasant face beyond the doorway and then walked to a stool.

"Thought I'd drop in," he observed.

"Good," commented Bob, spreading some sheets out to dry.

"Surprised! Got a regular print shop here!"

"Sure," nodded Bob proudly.

Mr. Baker Mills never said much. He had not had an altogether pleasant life before fate had kindly thrown him in the way of Bart Stirling.

That philanthropic and bustling young express agent had taken a liking to the harmless, persecuted outcast. He had righted the wrongs of Baker Mills, and the ex-roustabout had never forgotten it.

With his quiet, unobtrusive ways he was a general favorite at the hotel. He got many a generous "tip" from traveling men, and was saving money.

"All ready for business?" inquired Mills, after watching Bob's maneuvers for a spell.

"You bet!"

"Taking orders?"

"Fast as they come in."

"I've got one," announced Mills.

"Good for you!" cried the delighted Bob.

"Got two."

"Well, now, you're a friend, Mr. Mills!"

"I ought to be. Bart Stirling and you fellows just about made me. The hotel wants five hundred 'Rules and Regulations' printed on cardboard."

"Is that the copy?" asked Bob.

"Yes," said Mills, tendering an old card.

"We'll improve on it. What's the other?"

"Traveling man wants two hundred postal cards printed, with an announcement that he is on the road and will call on certain customers on certain dates. Here's what he has written. You leave a blank for the date."

"I see," said Bob. "Mr. Mills, you're just famous, bringing us in this work!"

"I'll pick up more."

"There will be a commission—"

"Not for me—not from Haven Brothers!" declared Mills definitely. "Thought maybe I might meet Bart Stirling here. He's in town."

"Is that so? I had not heard of it. If he is, though, he'll be sure to drop in here. You'll ex-

cuse me, but the ink 's just right, and I've got a hurry job on the press," explained Bob, turning to the press again.

"You keep right on, I love to watch you," said Mills. "Wish I was a printer myself."

Bob made the sheets fly. He laughed, chatted and whistled, and Baker Mills watched him in his peaceful happy way.

Darry came bustling in, his hat pushed back on forehead, pencil and paper in hand. He hailed their visitor with a hearty welcome and went straight to the office desk.

"Got a chance to estimate on a lawyer's brief, Bob," he announced. "Sixteen pages, straight matter. Think of it! What are these?"

"Two jobs Mr. Mills brought in."

"Mr. Mills is a jewel!" cried Darry. "Bob, we 're growing like a rolling snowball."

"Yes, have to hire help if this keeps on!" chuckled the happy Bob.

Darry went over to the table where the freshly printed circulars were drying. He picked up one, and held it at a distance with the eye of a connoisseur.

"Neat, perfect," he complimented. "The press is all they guaranteed it. That tasteful display is a stroke of genius, Bob. But—*Hold on!*"

Of a sudden Darry shouted out the words. Bob bounded back as startled as if he had said the shop was on fire.

Darry was staring closer at the circular in a dismayed way.

"Why, what's the matter, Darry?" demanded the astonished Bob.

Darry cast a quick glance at the printed circulars as though estimating their number.

"Six hundred sheets spoiled!" he announced. "What's the meaning of this, Bob? Stop the press!"

# CHAPTER VI

## "THE SOUL OF A GENTLEMAN"

Bob stopped the press promptly. He stood staring in profound wonder at his brother.

"Six hundred sheets spoiled!" he repeated incredulously—"what are you talking about, Darry?"

"Why, look for yourself," responded Darry. "We must n't be careless, Bob."

"Careless!" flared up the young foreman. "Did anybody ever see a neater job?"

"The presswork is all right, but the blunders—"

Bob Haven was quickly excited. He made a dash at the composing stone and snatched up the proof he had taken the night previous of the job on the press.

"Blunders!" he exclained. "Can't afford them in this office! We are n't that kind around here,

and don't make them. If that is n't a clean proof, please show me what is!"

Bob in righteous indignation rushed the proof into his brother's hand. Darry ran it over with his eyes. They began to widen in perplexed amazement and mystification.

"Here's a mystery!" he exclaimed. "The proof is certainly all right, but the printed circular—"

Darry consulted this again.

"Listen, Bob. Second line down: 'We wish to *fleece* our customers.' Should be '*please*.' End of second paragraph, 'We will give you satisfaction *nit*.' Should read '*net*.' Fifth line from the bottom: 'You will sell these goods at *loss*.' Should read '*cost*.'"

Bob took a look and fell back against the table, his face a void of consternation.

Baker Mills approached in his noiseless inoffensive way. He glanced quickly over Darry's shoulder.

"Easy," he observed.

"What's easy?" gulped the stricken Bob.

"Someone has queered you."

"Eh?"

"Yes. You had it right, you say. Well, someone has fixed it wrong."

"Why, of course," murmured Darry, growing thoughtful—"what else?"

"Who could?—How could they?" challenged Bob incoherently, and glaring wildly about the office.

Baker Mills shook his head slowly and sighed.

"Wicked world," he said. "Enemies are bad things. I know, for I had them once."

"Bob!" spoke Darry explosively, "you don't suppose—"

"What?" demanded Bob, his eyes roving over the doors and windows of their stronghold speculatively.

"The job was all right when you proved it?"

"Does n't that proof show it?"

"Who has been in here since?"

"Not a soul except ourselves."

"Then the fact is palpable: someone sneaked in last night and made those errors."

"How could they?"

"How did the *Eagle* people get on to the amount of our bid?"

"That's so!" cried Bob with snapping eyes. "Whoever changed that form knew all about type-setting, too. Say, if I thought this was another of Hemp Carson's mean tricks—"

"I should n't wonder if you had hit the nail on the head, Bob," announced a bright pleasant voice at the open doorway.

"Bart!" cried Darry, springing forward and clasping the hand of his loyal young friend.

Baker Mills's face lit up with sunshine. He shook Bart Stirling's hand as if he was proud of him. Then he obliterated himself on the remotest corner stool, but his eyes followed his young friend like those of some devoted animal.

"Now then, let us have the rights of this thing, fellows," suggested Bart in his brisk, sensible way.

The incident of the changed types was gone over in detail for Bart Stirling's benefit.

"I think there is no doubt of it," he said readily, "this is the work of some rival. I called here last night myself, but everything was locked up tight."

"Did you see anybody hanging around?" questioned Bob eagerly.

"I did—peering around the corner there was a man. I hailed him, but he ran. I thought at the time he resembled that *Eagle* fellow, Carson, but he was too quick for me."

"Well, we must be on our guard after this," said Darry seriously.

"How did he get in? That's the question that puzzles me," muttered Bob.

He examined all the doors and windows. Then he went upstairs. In a few minutes he came downstairs again, a satisfied but angry expression on his face.

"It was Hemp Carson, and nobody else," he declared.

"How do you know?" questioned Darry.

"Who else would be that mean?" challenged Bob. "He got in at the big loft door, lifting the hook from the staple with a pencil."

"How do you know that?"

"I found the pencil. It's one of the kind the *Eagle* had its name stamped on, and gave away for a souvenir. It's made of bright yellow

wood. This one is daubed with printing ink. What's more convincing is a string of tobacco that dropped from the pocket of the mean thief when he stooped to get through the doorway."

"Quite a detective, Bob!" laughed Bart. "Well, all you can do is to nail up tight and keep a close watch."

Bob was wrathful, and went about repairing the damage done with lowering brows and direful mutterings of vengeance.

Darry, however, soon forgot his troubles listening to Bart's animated recital of his new business career in the city.

The young express agent modestly described the importance and dignity of his position as assistant manager of an express office at Rockport. He told of the friendly kindness of the officials of the company, who had taken a manifest interest in him.

"Why! you fellows are making a regular donation party of your morning call," declared Darry gaily, as Bart handed over a written sheet. It was the copy for a letter ordered by some

office acquaintances of his who were going into a little mail order business as a side line.

"And still they come!" pronounced Bart in an encouraging undertone, as a man appeared at the door.

"This the printing office?" queried the new visitor.

"It is," announced Darry, advancing with his best business air. "What can we do for you?"

Baker Mills uttered a sort of a growl and arose. He had recognized the visitor as the man of all work of Colonel Jeptha Harrington. Bart recognized him, too, and bowed slightly.

"Here's a job for Mrs. Harrington," said the man, showing a sheet of pink-scented note paper. "She wants fifty invitations to a musicale printed."

"I see," said Darry examining the copy. "This is the matter, is it?"

"She wrote that, and said to use the finest paper. It must be just so, and ready for Saturday morning. Never mind the expense—have it right."

"It will be right and ready on time," promised

Darry. "Hold on,—don't you want the figures?"

"Guess not—she didn't say anything about that," answered the man carelessly. "When Mrs. Harrington wants a thing money don't cut no figure, you know."

"Well, this is a rush," cried Darry in a pleased way, as the man went off. "Mr. Foreman, are you going to be able to handle all these fresh orders?" He appealed to his brother with a grin.

"Don't worry about that," answered Bob. "Only—don't say much to me just now, though," he continued warningly. "I'll get into a fight with everybody soon, if I don't get that sneak, Hemp Carson, out of my mind."

"You let Hemp Carson alone," advised Bart. "He'll soon come to the end of his rope. What, going, Mr. Mills?"

Baker Mills had started for the door in a disturbed way.

"Guess I'd better," he said. "I'm like Bob —riled up."

"Why, what at?" asked Darry in surprise.

"Harrington. Maybe I'm sensitive, but I can't even run up against that name without a shiver. You know your business, boys, but the less you have to do with the Harringtons, root and branch, the wiser and richer you will be in the end."

"He is about right, I guess," said Bart, glancing thoughtfully after his friend. "Colonel Harrington very nearly destroyed that man's life. You know Mrs. Harrington is a whimsical, arrogant lady, with very little respect for the rights of others."

"Yes, I know," answered Darry. "I remember how she ordered some expensive lace work from your mother, claimed it was imperfect, but all the same gave it to a relative for a wedding present, and never paid for it. But we can't afford to turn her down, Bart. Business is business and she elects to be a customer. The job is n't much anyhow, and if I have to put profit down as experience it 's a cheap experiment."

"Haven Brothers in?"

There was another caller. Even Bob took an interest in this newcomer. All three recognized

the latest visitor, and each wondered what brought him to the printing office.

"Good morning Mr. Chase," said Darry politely, and Bob and Bart bowed also.

The visitor was a young man about twenty-five years old. He was recognized as the dude of Pleasantville, rather effeminate and trivial in his manners, but there was nothing of the rowdy about him.

About six months previous he had come from Rockport, and had started the *Society Journal.*

It was generally understood that the Harrington social set had encouraged him. Judging from the fulsome descriptions of the colonel's sumptuous home and Mrs. Harrington's imported party toilettes, this seemed true at the outset.

The paper had no general circulation, however. Neither Bart nor the Havens knew much about its course or prospects since the initial number had blazoned forth the greatness of the mighty leaders in local "sassiety."

As Bart shrewdly looked Mr. Chase over just now, he intuitively divined that the dude was in some kind of distress.

The society editor looked pale and worried. He wore a turned collar, and there was a certain threadbare aspect to his elegantly-fitting suit.

"I—that is—" spoke Augustus Chase in a hesitating and embarrassed way. "Heard you had started in the printing business. Quite a fine plant, capital plant, he observed, gazing critically about the place through his monocle.

Mr. Chase's soul was not in his words, however. It was plain to see he had something else on his mind.

"Have a chair," suggested Darry kindly.

"No—er, that is, not this time. Ah—er, gentlemen, perhaps I had better waste no time: I have come on business."

"Thank you," said Darry.

"I am in—that is, yes, I am in trouble," continued Mr. Chase, gazing stonily at nothingness. "In a confidential way, I have come to you, brothers of the craft, as you might say, to ask a favor—a great favor."

"Name it, Mr. Chase," said Darry frankly, "and if it lies in our power you certainly shall be accommodated."

A slight tremor crossed the face of the society editor. It made the observing Bart think of a person who had met with some hard knocks, and was touched at coming across a variation in the way of kind and courteous treatment.

"My paper," and Mr. Chase swallowed a difficult lump in his throat, "is, I may as well confess it, in difficulties. The fact is, the *Eagle* people don't like me."

"Do they like anyone that is trying to earn an honest living?" flared out the perturbed Bob.

"Easy, Bob," said Darry gently, in an undertone. "We understand the situation, Mr. Chase," he continued, to the society editor.

"They have bribed my compositor to leave me with the paper half set up," went on Mr. Chase. "They have—er, bought up his account, and threaten to sue me."

"That's them!" muttered Bob—"sharks! vampires!"

"My sentiments," nodded Mr. Chase approvingly. "They are rude, coarse people, unable to appreciate refinement or delicacy of feeling. I may not be a good business man, but I am a

gentleman, I hope, and I could not consent to meet them or truckle to them. If I can get out this week's issue, I can collect on some ads. and liquidate the—the—er—more pressing claims, and possibly survive."

"And you want our help?" asked Darry in an encouraging tone.

"I do. If I could get two columns of fresh matter set up, I can fill in with electros and get out a half-presentable issue," explained Mr. Chase. "Could you—er—that is, would you set them up for me?"

Darry hesitated a moment thoughtfully, then he said:

"I am sorry, Mr. Chase, but the body type of your paper is bourgeois?"

The society editor nodded an assent.

"We have nothing closer to it than brevier, and not a full font of that."

"I see," said Mr. Chase, bending his head to conceal his emotions of disappointment and chagrin, and he turned to depart.

Quick-witted Bob read the situation in a flash. He discerned readily that Mr. Chase believed

they were politely turning him down on a subterfuge.

"Hold on!" he cried impulsively, coming up to Chase. "We haven't the type, just as we say. If we had, you would be welcome to it. You have, haven't you?"

"Why, certainly, up at my office. But I can't find a compositor."

"I'm your man, announced Bob. You get your copy all ready, and I'll be on hand at half-past six this evening to rush her through."

"You—you 'll—"

Mr. Chase could speak only in a muffled tone.

"We'll have a lark, disappointing that old vulture, Jasper Mackey, proprietor of the *Eagle*, and his boon coyote, Hemp Carson!" announced Bob. "Make your mind easy, Mr. Chase. You get your end ready. I'll be on deck with my parcel of the goods!"

Augustus Chase always resented familiarity, but a warm flush suffused his face at this evidence of whole-heartedness.

"Haven Brothers," he said in a choking tone, "you are just what people told me I'd find you.

Thank you—thank you. Excuse, me, I can't say any more, I—I—"

Darry pretended to busy himself at some papers to relieve Chase of his manifest embarrassment and emotion.

"I'll pay you, of course—pay you well," resumed the society editor. "That is, after the paper is out. As security, I wish to tender this—"

"Hold on! shouted Bob Haven stormily—"none of that!"

He was fairly dramatic, as, with a challenging gesture he made Augustus Chase withdraw his hand extended to remove from his frayed, well-brushed necktie a small diamond pin nestling there.

"Thirty days is our rule," declared Bob, "and if you'll call the job just fun, to give those *Eagle* people a disappointment, it's a go!"

Mr. Augustus Chase gave Bob one look. He tried to speak, and failed. He went to the door, turned, and faltered.

Then, straightening up erect and proud, though entirely broken-spirited, he lifted his hat with the remark:

"Sir, you have the soul of a gentleman!"

## CHAPTER VII

### COLLECTING A BILL

"Give me that bill, Darry Haven!"

"Steady, Bob."

"I'll show you how to collect it. What! let that mean Old Crœsus beat us out of our just dues? Hand it over, and if I don't show up with the money inside of an hour, I'll eat my hat!"

"Some day you will really have to perform that rare gastronomic feat, Bob, if you keep on putting it up as forfeit on all occasions," said Darry with a laugh.

"Never mind!" flared up Bob.

"I shan't—and don't you, I'll attend to Mrs. Colonel Harrington's bill."

Bob Haven was thrashing around the office in his usual furious style when unduly excited.

Darry was quite as much perturbed, but, as the

balance wheel of the juvenile firm, he felt it incumbent on him to maintain a clear head and steady nerves.

The point at issue was that most troublesome element in Pleasantville social life: Mrs. Colonel Harrington. Baker Mills had predicted trouble the day they had taken the society job for that arrogant leader of the exclusive set.

Darry, however, had proceeded to carry out instructions. He had sent to the city to get just the shade and texture of paper required. The envelopes matched perfectly. A list had been supplied with the copy, and Darry had got Bart Stirling's sister, Bertha, to address the invitations in a neat, pretty hand.

Certainly the job was perfection. Haven Brothers were proud of it. Mrs. Colonel Harrington was a power in Pleasantville, and could influence a good deal of work their way if so disposed. They hoped for the best.

They wrapped up the job neatly for delivery, taking unusual pains to have it look attractive. At eleven o'clock Colonel Harrington's man

appeared at the doorway of the little printing office.

"Say," he drawled in his slouching way, "about that job for Mrs. Harrington."

"What about it?" questioned Darry.

"Cancel it."

"Eh!"

"She's changed her mind."

Darry was petrified, and Bob suddenly doubled his fist about a handful of type he was distributing.

"Changed her mind?" repeated Darry, in surprise.

"Yes, told me to tell you she'd decided to get the work done somewhere else."

"Oh, indeed!" said Darry softly, but nursing his wrath.

"This is the work of that Hemp Carson and the *Eagle* vultures again, I'll bet my hat!" muttered Bob.

The messenger had turned to leave. Darry halted him with a sharp hail.

"Wait a moment, my man."

"All right."

"The job you speak of was regularly ordered. It is completed. We shall insist on delivery. Here it is."

Something in Darry's manly business bearing made the man ashamed of himself.

"Sorry" he mumbled. "'Tain't my fault, I can't take the bundle."

"Why not?" demanded Bob.

"She'd fire me, if I did. She's always doing these things, and I can't help it. You'll have to see her about it."

"I certainly shall," remarked Darry, with firmness.

"Yes, and you tell her so!" shouted the irate junior member of the firm after the departing messenger.

"I will be back shortly, Bob," said Darry, leaving the office with a very determined look on his face.

When he returned Bob noticed that his brother had gone home and arrayed himself in his Sunday best.

Darry was a fine-looking young fellow, and was as spick and span in his neat and faultless attire as

a person especially prepared for a high-up social function.

"Must be going to take your pay by breaking into society," suggested Bob sarcastically.

"Not at all," returned Darry quietly. "I am simply going to collect that bill."

"With all those fal-lals? Say, Darry, you don't know your subject. Everybody is just common dirt to Mrs. Colonel Harrington, unless they've got a big lot of money. She'll wither you with her insolence, and you'll have your dress-up for nothing."

"Oh, well, I'll show her I can act the gentlemen, at least," said Darry.

"Wish I had the handling of the matter. He won't get the money," predicted the junior partner as his brother left the office.

Darry went straight to the Harrington mansion. He tendered a neat card bearing his name to the servant at the door.

That supercilious individual regarded Darry with a critical eye; was evidently impressed with the caller's make-up, and invited him into the vestibule.

In about two minutes the servant returned.

"Mrs. Harrington is engaged," he stated icily.

"Did you give her my card?" demanded Darry.

"Oh, yes."

"Then go back with it, and present this at the same time," and Darry handed the man the bill for the printing.

The servant hesitated.

"You need not delay," advised Darry in a resolute tone, "I shall not leave this house until Mrs. Harrington has seen that bill."

The servant departed with evident reluctance. He soon returned, and handed back to Darry both card and bill.

"Well?" demanded Darry.

"Mrs. Harrington does not know you."

"She knows me in a business way," persisted Darry.

"She says she owes no such bill, and for you to go away."

"Will you take another message to her?"

"Mrs. Harrington would decline to receive it. Excuse me, sir, but the bell is calling me."

Darry was deftly ushered out to the porch. Rather disconcerted, he acknowledged defeat, for he did not wish to make a fight of it.

Bob grinned all over his face when Darry returned to the office, crestfallen.

"What are you going to do about it now?" demanded Bob.

"I shall see Mr. Hutchinson, the lawyer."

"And pay fifty per cent for collecting that bill!"

"That is one of the exigencies of business."

"It needn't be of yours," declared Bob. "We can't afford such luxuries, just starting in. I'll collect that bill for twenty-five per cent, individually."

Darry looked his brother over inquisitively, but Bob's face was inscrutable. Darry was nettled at his treatment.

"And you needn't lend me your dress suit to make an impression in!" observed Bob with a sly chuckle. "I don't need it in my business."

"Think you can get the money, do you?"

"Sure."

"Well, try it!" surrendered Darry desperately, throwing the bill on the desk.

Bob picked the bill up, glanced it over, tore it up and made out a new one.

"Hold on!" challenged Darry.

"I'm running things now," observed Bob coolly.

He did not mind a bit that his inky fingers daubed the bill. He thrust it carelessly into the grimed pocket of his apron.

His arms up to his elbows were splotched here and there with the marks of his toil. Bob calmly put on a few more splatters.

"Bob, what are you up to?" demanded Darry with manifest uneasiness.

"I'll soon be up to the Harrington's," retorted Bob gaily. "So long!"

His paper cap jauntily set on the back of his head, a typical careless printer on a rush errand, Bob sallied forth, the musicale job under his arm.

When he reached the Harrington mansion he dallied at the gate, making a reconnoisance of the place.

Through the open front windows of the drawing-room the sounds of singing and piano playing echoed in the air.

Bob waited till a servant in the hall seemed to go to some other part of the house.

He gave his face an extra smudge with his inky fingers, and stole up the steps and to the open doorway.

Bob glided past the vestibule and a few yards down the softly-carpeted hall.

He glanced past some draperies. Half a dozen ladies were just leaving the piano. They had evidently been practicing for the musical.

Mrs. Colonel Harrington was conspicious among the group. Bob knew her by sight. He singled her out and crossed the threshold.

One of the ladies gave a little scream at the sudden intrusion, which instantly checked the lively chatter going on.

All drew back with wondering glances except Mrs. Harrington. As the hostess, she swept forward with queenly dignity and astonishment.

"Boy, how dare you!" she cried.

"That's all right," said Bob lightly. "You are Mrs. Harrington? I came to deliver the invitations you ordered from Haven Brothers. There they are, ma'am, and here's the bill."

"THERE YOU ARE, MA'AM, AND HERE'S THE BILL."—*Page* 74.

Mrs. Colonel Harrington turned as red as a beet. She trembled with inward rage. She stamped her foot.

"Go—at once!" she ordered, pointing majestically to the door. "Do you hear me—at once!"

"No, ma'am," said Bob, "not till I get the money. I've got to get it."

He took off his cap and sat upon a satin-lined ornamental chair.

The colonel's wife quivered as his grimed work apron switched recklessly across its cream-puffed arms.

"Boy," she gasped, "who let you in? Go, do you hear me?"

Bob got up, but he electrified his hostess afresh as he rubbed his besmirched elbow against a fragile lovely curtain.

"I'll stand up," he said, diffusing stupidity and perversity into tones and bearing. "The job was ordered all right and done all right. If we don't get our money, we'll advertise the facts by circulars and offer to sell the invitations as souvenirs."

"Did you ever!" exclaimed one of Mrs. Harrington's bosom friends.

"Oh, this is too much!" panted Mrs. Colonel Harrington herself. "Such an affront! I'll—I'll send the money."

"No, ma'am," said Bob solemnly—"spot cash are our terms."

"I won't—ring for Samuels! Oh, such insolence! In my own house—oh! oh!"

Mrs. Harrington fell over on a sofa in a hysterical fit. The bell rang for Samuels.

The doughty representative of Haven Brothers retired as he heard hurried footsteps. It was only to cross the hall, however, and enter the sumptuous library.

He could see the man servant, a maid and Colonel Harrington himself in turn hasten into the drawing-room.

He could catch sounds like the confused cackling of a lot of hens, and the subdued cries of the affronted lady of the house.

Then the servant spied Bob, slid into the drawing-room, and imparted some information to the colonel.

The big, self-important magnate of Pleasantville came storming into the library.

Bob had seated himself in a luxurious armchair. Colonel Harrington shot one glance at him, wrathful and dangerous.

"Are you the boy—" he began loudly.

"Haven Brothers—bill must be paid," observed Bob sententiously.

"You young scoundrel!" roared the colonel. "What do you mean, intruding here and scaring my wife half to death?"

"She scared us half to death because we feared we would n't get our money," declared Bob.

"You never will!"

"Then I'll stick."

Bob had stood up. He sat down again.

"This is intolerable!" panted the colonel. "I'll—I'll throw you out!"

"You won't—without a row," observed Bob coolly. "You 're big, but it will be work. You pay my bill. Shame on you, trying to cheat hard-working people out of their money!"

Colonel Harrington was a coward, physically

and morally. He recognized that he was dealing with no ordinary proposition.

"There's a bad-debt collection agency at Rockport," went on Bob, undaunted. "If this bill isn't paid at once, we will hire its yellow wagon to stop in front of your door every day for an hour until it is."

"You young ruffian!" choked out the colonel. "Not so loud. Oh, this common rabble!" he groaned, as he realized that his wife's guests could hear every word. "Give me your bill. How is this? It was only three dollars and fifty cents."

"Oh, Mrs. Harrington did know Haven Brothers enough to glance it over?" said Bob. "Well, it's five dollars now—one dollar and fifty cents for my time wasted in calling for it, and I won't rebate it one cent."

"Receipt it!" snapped the colonel savagely.

"Five dollars," demanded Bob, penciling the firm's name, but keeping tight hold of the receipt. "Thank you," he added in mock politeness as a five-dollar bill was passed to him.

Bob walked to the door and down the hall.

Colonel Harrington was boiling over with pent-up rage.

He caught a titter from the interested group in the drawing-room.

"Samuels!" he roared to the servant, tidying up the sofa which Mrs. Harrington had disordered.

"Yes, sir."

"Kick that young scoundrel off the premises."

"Yes, sir."

Bob heard the words. He halted like a statue.

"Try it," he challenged, facing squarely about.

The colonel cringed, and the servant shuffled nervously.

Bob eyed them silently for a moment, walked leisurely down the steps, and started along the graveled walk with a careless whistle on his lips.

# CHAPTER VIII

## AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE

The days moved on pretty smoothly for Haven Brothers and their enterprise after the Harrington episode.

Bob signalized himself and won a friend for life in helping out Augustus Chase with his *Society Journal.*

The tireless young typo stayed up all night setting up the two columns of matter for Chase, and showed up at the old carpenter shop in the morning as bright as a dollar.

The Novelty Works job was delivered and paid for, and highly commended by Mr. Dawes.

The work brought in by Bart Stirling and Baker Mills was sent out on time. Each day some small order found its way to the little printing office. Darry was very hopeful of landing one or two large contracts that would give them a regular amount of work each month.

At the end of the first week the boys proudly balanced their ledger, seven dollars and fifty cents "to the good," as Bob expressed it.

The second week's earnings were exactly twelve dollars, and the month showed up sixty-three dollars and seventy-five cents profit.

Bob ran his department on a neat, thrifty system. Darry, always on the outside, discovered new friends and prospects daily.

Hemp Carson troubled them no further for the present. Nevertheless, the boys kept a close lookout for tricks and traps.

One afternoon Bob had to go to the express office for some blank cards shipped from the city.

He locked the door, but did not close the windows. There was no need of this precaution any longer, he decided.

Bob gave a whistle, and down the stairs bounded Christmas, a canine friend he had picked up a year before.

A man named Lem Wacker had left Pleasantville in a hurry and under a cloud and he had abandoned the dog. Bob discovered the animal chained up in a cold, empty barn. He rescued

and fed him, and Christmas had developed into a faithful watchdog.

Bob left the intelligent animal on guard with every confidence in the vigilance of Christmas, and went after the express package.

He was returning down a street on which the hotel sided, when a little incident halted him. Bob lingered, curious and interested, for some minutes.

A side entrance door to the hotel had opened. A suit case was dropped smartly on to the pavement. There followed the steward of the hotel, leading or rather hustling a boy about Bob's own age.

The boy walked with a crutch and limped slightly. As he was pushed out upon the stone landing of the steps, Bob heard the steward say:

"Now, you stay out of here!"

"Don't worry, I shall," answered the boy calmly.

"Don't fret, I'll see that you do!"

"By the way, though," observed the ejected guest, "just keep my bill ready, will you? You'll get your pay all right inside of twenty-four hours."

"Yah, you dead beat!"

"That's a mistake, my friend. I'll prove it to you to-morrow."

The steward slammed the door shut and locked it. The boy sat down on the steps, viewed his suit case with a comical grin, took out a bag from his pocket and rolled a cigarette.

"Why, it's the very fellow!" breathed Bob excitedly.

"With vivid suddenness there recurred to Bob's mind the night he crossed Parker's Pasture.

A trifle paler, as though he had gone through a fit of sickness, his once ultra-stylish checked suit a little more threadbare, this was still the strange boy who had given Bob that mysterious satchel.

That article was undoubtedly now rotting away three hundred feet down the old well shaft. Bob had almost forgotten about it. Now, as the youth showed up again, everything was revived to his active imagination, and he was immensely interested.

Bob fancied he could correctly read the situation presented. The boy had been a guest of the

hotel, had become delinquent in his payments, and had been evicted.

The suit case did not look very prosperous. Its owner sat puffing at the cigarette in a thoughtful, resigned way. Bob could not help it—he was the most friendly, humane boy in the world, and he went straight up to the desolate owner of the suit case.

"Hello!" hailed Bob.

The stranger looked up sharply. He scanned Bob with a critical glance.

He nodded silently; Bob observed that he did not recognize him as his rush messenger at Parker's Pasture.

"In trouble?" pressed Bob.

"Trouble is n't in my line, my friend," observed the stranger, with a hard laugh. "I have a good motto: 'Everything is worth something, nothing is worth worrying about.'"

"I've heard that before," suggested Bob.

"Fold it to your heart all the same, it's a good maxim."

The stranger continued to puff at his cigarette. Bob urged his point.

"Looks as if you had some bother in there?" he suggested, indicating the hotel.

"Oh, yes," answered the other with an indifferent shrug of his shoulders. "First week parlor floor, funds flush. Second week third floor, funds weak. Third week garret, funds gone. Fourth week—the sidewalk." He waved his hand across it. "Now—fresh air and the blue sky." He made a dramatic sweep of the horizon.

"What are you going to do now?" inquired Bob.

"Oh, something will turn up," declared the boy in a bored way.

"Have you any money?" asked Bob.

"Not a cent."

"And no friends here?"

"No."

"I don't see," said Bob impulsively, "how you can take it so indifferently. You have been sick, have n't you?"

"Cut ankle, yes."

"It has crippled you. Look here, I don't know you, but you 're homeless and friendless—"

"You say that very solemn," remarked the stranger with a droll smile. "Some people don't care for home. Some people find friends no use. I'm one of them."

"I'll tell you," began Bob hesitatingly, "you've got to find a shelter. I can offer you an indifferent one—" he was thinking of an old cot upstairs in the print shop—"and we'd see you didn't go hungry till you get things around right."

The strange boy drew erect with a quick flash of his eyes.

"Are you offering me charity?" he challenged harshly.

"No, I'm anxious to give you a lift till you get on your feet."

"I don't make my living by my feet. My brains serve me for that. Don't mind. You're a good sort, and I take you right, I guess. But I'll manage."

"If you don't, let me know," said Bob.

He handed the stranger a Haven Brothers card. Bob was about to go on his way when the strange boy gave a whistle, fixed his eye on the corner and beckoned.

Bob turned to investigate the object of his interest.

He saw Stet, the office boy of the *Eagle*, pulling at a piece of rope, to the end of which was tied a measly-looking white dog.

That is, the dog had been white once. An accumulation of mud and grime had, however, given the animal a neutral tint impossible to describe.

"Hi, boy!" sang out Bob's companion.

Stet stood still, then sidled up to the steps.

He viewed Bob in a shrinking, shamefaced way.

"What you want?" he inquired of the strange boy.

"Let's have a look at your dog, son."

He snapped his finger and spoke to the sorry cur in a soft, peculiar tone.

The animal looked at him, crept towards him and began to lose its slouchiness.

The boy caressed it under the muzzle, stroked it, purred to it. It seemed to discover a friend. Bob considered that when a dog made friends with a stranger the latter must be all right, and thought a good deal more of the crippled youth than before.

The latter seemed examining the dog for "points." Suddenly he fixed his eye on the downtrodden Stet.

"Your dog, son?" he inquired.

"No'p."

"Where did you get him?"

"Picked him up."

"Where are you taking him?"

"To the pound. They pay twenty-five cents for stray animals."

"That your business—dog catcher?"

"No, it ain't!" jerked out Stet sullenly.

"He's a printer boy," explained Bob—"works at the *Eagle* office."

"No, I don't," mumbled Stet. "I did. I won't any more, though—drat 'em!"

"Oh, have you left there?" asked Bob.

"No—fired."

"What for?"

"Dropping a bottle of beer from under my coat that Hemp Carson sent me for," blurted out Stet savagely. "He let me take all the blame, and old Mackey let me out. Never mind, I'm glad. I wouldn't go back there if they'd let me."

"See here, son," broke in the stranger, "I'll buy your dog. I'll give you a dollar for him."

"You will?" cried Stet radiantly.

"Yes, come around for your money to-morrow afternoon."

"Where?" inquired Stet skeptically.

"Right here. Hold on, though. Do you know this young man?"

"Everybody knows Bob Haven."

"Then perhaps, Mr. Bob Haven, you will allow me to leave a dollar at your place—I see the address," and the stranger scanned the card Bob had given him.

"Why, yes," assented Bob.

"Look here, son," continued the stranger, as Stet stood eyeing him dubiously, "I observe you're wondering if I'll make good. Well, you keep that suit case for me till I pay you. See? I can't lug it around. I've got only a few soiled collars in it, but the case is good for two dollars at any junk shop."

Stet relinquished hold of the rope and took up the suit case. The dog nestled up to the strange boy as if he was a loving master of long standing.

Bob had no excuse for delay, but he was both entertained and puzzled over the queer proceedings of the moment.

"I say," he spoke, "it 's none of my business, but you 're a queer fellow."

The strange boy gave him a wise, odd smile.

"Think so," he observed. "Why?"

"You say you have no money, no home, no friends. Yet you buy a dog."

"Oh, that 's business," came the rapid retort.

"You mean?—"

"This," and the speaker set his hand on the dog's head, "is my stake."

"I don't understand."

"Business investment. I don't stay down long. I have bright ideas, see? This dog will put me on Easy Street by this time to-morrow."

"It is a valuable dog, then?" suggested Bob.

"I'll make him valuable," asserted the strange boy, with a mysterious chuckle. "My price is two hundred dollars, and I'll get it."

"I am curious to know how."

"When I bring that dollar for our young friend with the dismal countenance, maybe I'll tell you."

Bob went on his way. He was so occupied thinking over the whimsical episode of the hour that he did not notice what had become of Stet.

The latter had gone off with the satchel. When he reached the corner he sat down and looked undecided.

Evidently he found it an elephant on his hands. Then, as Bob passed him, a glint of suggestion showed in his eye.

Stet seemed to form some sudden resolution. He took up the satchel and covertly followed Bob.

The latter reached the printing office by way of the alley.

As he neared the carpenter shop he stared at it in profound astonishment. From the inside echoed a hideous babel of squawks. Intermingled was the frantic cries of some human being in palpable distress.

"Murder! fire! take him off!" rang out in alarming accents on the afternoon air.

Bob ran promptly around to the front of the structure.

The young typo witnessed the most extraordinary spectacle of his life.

# CHAPTER IX

## "DUCKS!"

A FARMER'S double team was standing at the street curb. Its apparent owner was astride one of the open window sills.

He was halfway in, halfway out, and seemed unable to move either way.

His pose suggested that he was tightly glued there. His face was a working map of fright and consternation.

"Help!" he yelled lustily.

"What is the matter?" inquired Bob.

"Murder! Fire! Take him off! I'll be clawed up alive!"

Bob Haven had to laugh outright. He made out the merits of the situation after a closer look.

"Drop it, Christmas!" he called.

Something relaxed the strain on the farmer, for the latter toppled forward suddenly.

He lopped over, shot clear of the sill, and landed with a grunt on the ground outside.

Bob glanced in at the window. The dog, Christmas, looked up at him, wagging his tail proudly.

In his jaws he held a scrap of the farmer's coat-tails. The loss of the same was discovered by the ruralite as he got to his feet.

He looked sourly at Bob and shook his fist at the dog.

"Drat me, if I'll ever be accommodating again!" he growled.

"Oh, it's Mr. Griggs," said Bob. "You seem to have got into difficulties, sir?"

"Yes, I have!" snapped the farmer, "and I ought to have the law on you. What kind of an animile do you keep in yonder, anyhow?"

"That's only our watchdog."

"Only! He's a tiger and lion rolled up into one. Why, blest if the critter even showed the tip of his nose till he got me good and foul."

"Foul?" repeated Bob. "Why, Mr. Griggs, it sounds to me as if there are several fowls hereabouts!"

A deafening cackling din emanated from inside the print shop as Bob spoke.

"Ducks," explained the farmer.

"Ducks?" echoed Bob bewilderedly.

"Sartain. Case of 'em. Produce. Sign that bill and let me go. I reckon that animile has held me there for half an hour."

Bob understood now, and he smiled broadly.

Griggs, who ran a fruit farm about ten miles from Pleasantville, had come in the week previously to order some labels printed for the fruit packages he shipped to commission houses in the city.

He had haggled over the price in shrewd Yankee fashion. When the same was decided on he insisted on paying in "produce."

It seemed he had arrived with the "produce" in question during Bob's absence. The same comprised a crate of ducks.

Being in a hurry, he had carried the crate from his wagon and pushed it through the open window.

"I intended to leave 'em here and call later for my receipt," he explained. "That pesky

animile never let on till I got a straddle of the winder to give the crate a push clear of it. Then he nailed me. He let me in, but he would n't let me out."

"He is a good watchdog," observed Bob.

"Good, your way of thinking, maybe," retorted the farmer.

"Well," as Bob receipted the bill he had presented, "no hard feelings, only I'll do a mail order business with you after this until you get rid of that dog."

Bob accompanied Mr. Griggs to his wagon, smoothing down the irascibility of a possible future customer in a nice, pleasant way.

"Got any children, Mr. Griggs?" he inquired, as the farmer took up the lines.

"A coop-full of 'em."

"Wait a minute, then, I may be able to send them something that will interest them."

Bob ran back to the office and let himself in. He selected several pretty advertising novelties that had come to them as samples and a showy calendar, and presented them to the farmer.

"Now that 's clever, young man" said Mr.

Griggs. "Mirandy just wanted a big figure date-teller like that. When I want some more printing I'll come and see you."

"And we'll chain up the dog. Good day, Mr. Griggs," said Bob cheerily, and sent the customer on his way in rare good nature.

"And now for the produce," said Bob. "Ducks—eighteen of them. He has given good measure all right. The bill was five dollars. The ducks must be worth about forty cents apiece. But what in the world are we going to do with them?"

Bob regained the office and inspected the crate curiously.

Christmas, on a pointer-poise, stood ready to snap at the first incautious head extended beyond the slats.

"How shall we get rid of them?" reflected Bob. "We don't want them at home."

"Say, Mr. Haven," piped a hesitating voice.

Bob turned to the door. Stet stood there, looking timid and undecided.

"Oh, it's you?" said Bob. "What can we do for you, Stet?"

"Would you let me leave this case here till to-morrow?"

"Certainly."

"And call for that dollar the fellow with the crutch is going to pay me for the dog?"

"Yes—if he leaves it."

"I think he will," said Stet in a depressed tone. "I hope he will. I'm gone up if he don't."

Bob looked the little fellow over curiously. With his dirty face and disconsolate air Stet looked more impish than ordinary.

"Say," observed Stet, setting the suit case in a corner, "you've got an awful nice layout here."

"Think so?"

"'Taint much like the *Eagle*—grease, tobacco and beer. They never sweep out, there."

"Did you say you had quit working at the *Eagle* office?" inquired Bob.

"Yes, they fired me. It was mean, after Hemp Carson borrowing a week's wages and me getting discharged for following his orders."

"You must find a new job, Stet."

"How can I?" demanded the youngster

seriously. "All I understand is the printing business."

Bob had to smile.

"Wish I could get into a place like this," said Stet longingly. "Just wish it—oh, don't I! It 'd just be heaven to be where it was clean, and no cuffing and swearing—among real human beings!"

Stet cried as he said it. Bob, however, gave him no encouragement. He was afraid of anything that had the *Eagle* taint to it.

"Can't you give me a job?" pressed Stet eagerly. "Say, I'll work for my keep till I show you that I'm straight—now."

"Were n't you always straight, Stet?" asked Bob pointedly.

"No, I was n't. I got to be just like the crowd I was with. Say, it was me who sneaked up the stairs here and heard you and your brother talking about your bid on the Novelty Works job. I had to—Hemp Carson made me."

Stet continued to weep. He acted broken up and desperate. Then, hanging his head, he continued:

"If I hadn't got fired, Hemp Carson was going to make me creep up here some night when you had a big form leaning against the stone, and throw a brick through the window and 'pi' it."

Bob looked pretty serious at this abominable confession.

"I am sorry I did it" went on Stet, "but I couldn't help it. I was just Hemp Carson's slave. Now I've got no job and no place to go. Father larruped me when I told him I was fired, and said not to show my face inside the house till I got a new job. Say, Mr. Haven, give me a show, won't you? I love the printing business. I can handle forms right and wash them, and distribute type. I can even set a little. I ain't no bad boy. I don't use tobacco or swear, and I would not touch a penny that wasn't my own. I am just a poor unfortunate, and I need a friend."

Bob was moved. The frankness of the poor homeless mite touched him deeply.

"I'll trust you if Darry will," he said.

"Oh, if you will! oh, if you will!" cried Stet fervently.

L. OF C.

"Where do you stay now and how do you get enough to eat?" enquired Bob.

"I don't. I slept on the common last night, and an old chum gave me his school lunch this morning."

"Go and get a meal," directed Bob, tendering a quarter. "Then come back here. I'll see what I can do for you. Maybe Darry would consent to your sleeping upstairs here till you can arrange to go home again."

Stet stood fingering the coin with glistening eyes and dancing rapturously from foot to foot.

"Oh, cracky!" he cried, "Oh, cracky! if I could ever become a real printer in a real shop like this!"

"You would have to take Christmas as a companion," said Bob. "We can't turn him out."

"Huh!" exclaimed Stet, putting his hand fearlessly on the animal's shaggy head. "I'd rather sleep with a dog than with Hemp Carson, any day!"

# CHAPTER X

## STET

DARRY came into the office on the hustle about five minutes after Stet had departed.

He was after some paper samples for a customer waiting at the hotel, but took time to seek an explanation of the presence of the ducks. Bob also told his brother briefly about Stet.

"We can't afford any experiments," Darry stated. "I hope it is no trick of the *Eagle* crowd."

"I'll vouch for that part of it," declared Bob.

"Very well, if the boy is trustworthy and deserving, and you can make use of him, follow your own ideas," said Darry.

Darry hurried away on business bent, and Stet returned after a while.

He was complacent and grateful.

"I've had the meal of my life!" he said, tendering Bob fifteen cents.

"What for—ten cents?"

"Yes, sir, when you know where to go and how to spend it."

"Well, keep the change for your supper," suggested Bob.

"All right. I'll pay you back out of that dollar I get to-morrow," promised Stet.

"In the meantime I will give you a chance to earn a little something," said Bob. "You see those ducks?"

"They're fine ducks," nodded Stet.

"A customer has paid us in truck. Go around to the storekeepers and see what you can get for them."

"Eighteen," counted Stet. "They'll run three to four pounds each. We used to keep ducks. They bring forty to sixty cents."

Stet darted away on his commission. He was gone an hour. He returned perspiring, fagged out and dejected.

"No go," he reported.

"Why not?" inquired Bob.

"Why, someone—maybe your customer—brought a whole load in this morning. He

stocked three groceries and two meat markets, besides selling to the hotel."

"Can't you get an offer on them?"

"Yes, one man offered thirty-five cents. That is n't enough. Say, Mr. Haven, if you 'll let me take my time and my own way, I'll sell them all and get a fair price for them."

"Try it, Stet, if you like."

Stet darted away again. He returned in a few minutes with a dilapidated two-wheeled handcart he had borrowed somewhere.

At Stet's suggestion Bob helped him load on the crate.

"What's your scheme, Stet?" he inquired interestedly.

"Why, the wholesale market is glutted, ain't it?"

"It seems so."

"Then I intend to get ahead of them on the retail market—I'm going to peddle those ducks from house to house." Bob did not demur. He decided it would be a test of Stet's ability.

The young printer had plenty to do that after-

noon. Engrossed in congenial labor, six o'clock came around almost before he knew it.

"I fancy Stet has fallen down on his proposition somewhere, or got stranded," Bob decided, as he began closing the windows preparatory to locking up for the night.

A rattle of ricketty wheels claimed his attention just as he set the key in the door lock. Stet rounded the building pushing the old cart before him.

He was lame and covered with dust, but there was a sort of glorified expression on his face as he saw Bob.

"Hooray!" he piped, though rather weakly. "Mr. Haven, I sold them all, and got fifteen cents for the coop."

"Well, well," commended Bob encouragingly.

"I've got eight dollars and seventy cents."

Bob gave utterance to a whistle of wonder.

"Some I got forty-five cents for, some as high as fifty-five. There's your money."

Untying the blackest handkerchief Bob had ever seen, Stet counted out eight dollars and seventy cents.

"Stet," pronounced Bob in tones of profound admiration, "you are positively a business genius."

"It was hard," confessed Stet, sinking to the steps and mopping his brow. "Bet I've traveled twelve miles. I thought I was stuck about five o'clock, but a boarding-house bought four of the ducks. You see," observed Stet, with a meaning glance at his tattered garments, "I suppose they thought I stole them."

"You are all right, Stet," declared Bob, giving him a hearty slap on the shoulder. "Now then, I am going to give you two dollars as commission."

"Me! Two dollars?" repeated Stet hysterically. "Oh, never!"

"Yes, I am, and come upstairs and I'll show you an old cot you can sleep on, if you like."

"Yes, I know about the upstairs," answered Stet, looking gloomy and ashamed.

"You can stay here to-night if you want to do so," continued Bob. "In the morning I am going to make you a business proposition."

"Say," cried Stet breathlessly, "you don't think you'll hire me to work in the printing office?"

"Perhaps."

"Jolly! if I thought it I'd lay awake all night singing. Say, try me!" pleaded Stet wistfully. "I'd work my finger nails off for decent treatment and a chance to be somebody."

"I believe you would, Stet. Here is the key. You see, I trust a good deal to your honor—all that Haven Brothers have in the world," added Bob solemnly. "If Hemp Carson should tempt you—"

"Mr. Haven," said Stet, bursting into tears, "do you think a boy who has confessed how mean he has been, and told how hard he wants to do right, could play any trick on a person good as you have been to me?"

"I don't," answered Bob promptly, "and that is why I trust you."

Bob felt that he was risking a good deal, but his kindly impulses prevailed. He left Stet with a cheerful word, told him to be sure and feed Christmas, who seemed to make friends with the forlorn refugee at once, and started away.

Bob did not go straight home. He was turning a good deal over in his mind. Bob knew

where Stet's folks lived, and he made his way thither.

The family were a shiftless set. The father was a drunkard. He was a widower, and a crabbed old aunt took charge of the large family of children.

Bob had a talk with Stet's father. The latter, half maudlin, told a long story of all he had done for Stet. He declined to take the boy home again until he reported with a week's wages in his pocket.

"It would be rather a mercy to keep the boy away from such disheartening home influences," Bob decided.

He did not tell Darry what he had done that evening, as it might worry his brother. In fact, Bob was a trifle worried himself until he reached the printing office next morning.

A pleasing surprise greeted him. The place was opened up for business. The floor was swept as clean as a parlor. The paper stock was piled up neatly, and the press plate cleaned and burnished like silver.

Stet had meddled with nothing he did not understand, and what he knew all about from his

previous experience in a printing office he had done well.

The boy had evidently made a tour of the town stores the night previous with his two dollars.

He had bought a neat little cap, had got his hair cut, shined up his shoes, and his old tattered jacket had given place to a light sweater.

Bob was immensely pleased. He liked to do good to others, and in the present instance the recipient had proven himself both grateful and responsive.

Bob decided on no half measures. He sat down and made Stet seat himself opposite him, and he gave him a good talking to. The result was pleasing to Stet, for Bob told him he could consider himself a fixture for a week at three dollars, and sleep upstairs at night.

Darry, coming in later, found the new apprentice at work. He spoke pleasantly to Stet, and made no comment.

Stet proved himself a model of industry and zeal all the morning. He seemed to know just when to talk, and just when to maintain silence.

He anticipated Bob's wants at the press, dis-

tributed type, trimmed paper, and did a score of little helpful things with an intelligent knack of familiarity.

When Stet went off for his nooning, Bob felt very well satisfied so far with his services.

Stet returned at one o'clock. He handed Bob a written sheet.

"'Two thousand envelopes, two thousand business cards, two thousand letter heads,'" read Bob. "For the Plunder Store. These your figures, Stet?"

"Yes, sir, I made the estimate and they accepted it. Is it all right?"

"You know how to charge all right," suggested Bob.

"The *Eagle* people would n't do it for less," declared Stet. "You see, I know the Plunder Store people, I put out a fire there one night and saved the place, they say. When I told them to-day I was trying to work up a new job for myself, they gave me that order right away. Say, Mr. Haven, is all this luck, or your goodness, or am I really good for something?"

"You're a capital fellow, Stet," declared Bob

honestly, "and I'm glad and proud to have you with us."

Poor Stet pretended to busy himself at some type to hide his tears—but they were tears of joy and gratitude.

Stet's only disappointment was that the boy who had bought the dog from him had not appeared with the promised dollar.

Bob narrated Stet's progress to his brother that evening at home, and Darry was as much pleased as himself.

Stet improved constantly. The office was a degree cleaner, if that could be possible, than the first morning of his apprenticeship. His awkwardness and cringing looks of fear began to wear off. He was cheerful, happy and accommodating.

Bob was alone in the office one afternoon, when Stet, who had been sent out on an errand, came into the office on a rush.

He was greatly excited, and he waved his hand towards the street in a convulsive way.

"Quick, Mr. Haven!" he shouted breathlessly. "I want to show you the sight of your life!"

# CHAPTER XI

## THE ZEBRA DOG

Bob Haven was yet enough of the average boy to be lifted from his business balance at the suggestion of undue excitement.

Stet ran out to the street again and stopped animatedly looking towards the next corner, beckoning wildly to Bob.

It was raining gently, but Bob did not mind that. Composing stick in hand, he went out to the walk and joined his young apprentice.

The corner building was the one pretentious office structure of Pleasantville. At its new curb a spirited team of horses attached to a dog-cart was tied.

"Colonel Harrington's turn-out," said Bob.

"That's it," bolted Stet with a chuckle. "Look at the crowd."

"What are they gaping at?" inquired Bob.

"Come nearer. See, on the front seat."

"A dog."

"The white dog I sold to that checked suit fellow.

"That is n't a white dog."

"No, but he was once. It's the same dog. Say—oh, I've got to laugh!"

Stet did laugh, till he had to hold his sides. Bob went twenty feet nearer.

A crowd stood under an awning. Each member of it was on a broad grin. They seemed to be exchanging remarks that increased prevailing risibilities, staring fixidly at the Harrington outfit.

The object of their attention was the dog Stet had indicated to Bob.

The canine had a heavy brass-studded collar about his throat. He sat patient and conspicuous on the front seat.

At a distance the animal seemed symetrically spotted and striped. As Bob's keen eyes ran him over mechanically, however, the young typo began to "catch on" and grin like the others. Truly the dog presented a unique appearance.

The rain was beginning to soak his hide. From nose to tail the spots and stripes began to spread, blur and run.

A purplish yellow tinge overspread the general surface. This changed rapidly to a dirty white, the colors dripping in a little pool on the tan leather cushions.

The cur seemed to realize that some remarkable transformation was going on, and hung its head in a shamed way.

"What's the oracle, Stet?" propounded the puzzled and interested Bob.

"Colonel's dog."

"So you say."

"Colonel Harrington's inside the barroom at the corner there now. I saw him. He's bragging about that very dog. Drove up here about an hour ago with the dog. Beautiful dog, then. But it had n't rained!"

Bob put back for the office as a fresh dash of rain threatened to soak them. Stet followed him.

"Go on with your story," urged Bob.

"There's an item in the *Eagle*, just off the

press. It says that Colonel Harrington has bought a very rare and valuable zebra dog, from Cape Natal, Africa."

"Is that so."

"Someone in the crowd said he'd paid two hundred dollars for it. Don't you see? He's been buncoed."

"You don't suppose—" began Bob, with a start of intelligence.

"That's it! The old white dog I sold to the fellow with the suit case. He's a sharper, that fellow, I saw it in his eye. He painted or stained the dog, and played it soft on Colonel Harrington. Hurry, something new is up—hear them!"

"Here, you attend to business," checked Bob, as his excited subordinate, at the sound of shouts from the corner, showed a disposition to bolt again for the street.

"Oh, please," panted Stet, "let me see the finish!"

"Go ahead, but only for a minute, though. Do you want to be a kid always?"

"Won't go then!" muttered Stet sturdily. "Oh, he's coming this way—see! see!"

"The colonel's dog-cart passed rapidly down the side street in full view of the printing office.

Colonel Harrington's face was a vast blank of chagrin and rage as he whipped up the steeds savagely.

He was urging them up to escape a pursuing mob, hooting and jeering at their unpopular fellow citizen.

"Zebra dog—Yah!"

"Two hundred dollars—whoop!"

"'Our esteemed townsman has secured a new and valuable acquisition,'" quoted a strident voice in the crowd. "Get fast colors next time, Colonel!"

The poor dog, resembling a mottled Easter egg as to tint, the colonel had rudely thrust to the floor of the vehicle where he was kicking it vengefully.

Mob and fugitive drifted past and out of view like a rapid kaleidoscopic picture.

"I'd like to know if that fellow really got two hundred dollars," observed Stet, getting serious again. "I'd like my dollar."

"I am afraid if what you think is true, he does

not work on a very high standard of morality, remarked Bob.

"Oh, I hope he did soak the colonel!" said Stet. "There's the meanest man in Pleasantville. He had father arrested and fined for sleeping in his garden one night when father was—tired. He hit me with his whip once because I tried to get across a street in front of his horses. And he's a sucker!" continued Stet. "They say he's hoaxed a dozen times a year buying things to make a brag and show that don't pan out genuine."

"Mr. Robert Haven," sang out an abrupt voice at the door.

"Oh," hailed Bob, looking up from the case, "it's you, Mr. Mills."

Baker Mills held a card in his hand bearing a name written in pencil. There was a peculiar smile on his face as he tendered it to Bob.

"'Percy St. Clair,'" read Bob. "Who's he?"

"Don't you know?"

"Not I," declared Bob.

"He seems to know you."

"That 's where he has the advantage. I never heard of him before."

"Well, he's one of our guests at the hotel. Star boarder just now," said Baker Mills. "Asked me to bring his card to you and fetch you back with me, if you would come."

Bob re-read the card; he was puzzled.

"It may be one of Darry's customers," he said. "All right, I'll come, but if he has any business with us why did n't he come himself?" inquired Bob.

"Could n't—laid up."

"Oh, is he sick?"

"No—crippled. Was with us before for nearly a month, and had a cut foot. Went away a day or two ago, pretty small potatoes. Came back again yesterday, lordly as a nabob. Only his foot was worse—"

"Oho!" exclaimed Bob, "I know him now. He wears a checked suit—"

"He did," corrected Baker Mills with a broad smile. "This morning he sent down to a clothing house. I wish you 'd see the dazzling raiment he ordered."

"Say," said the observant Stet, edging up to Bob, "it's the fellow that gave me the suit case?"

"It looks that way," assented Bob.

"Going to see him?"

"I reckon I'd better."

"Then just remind him that he owes me a dollar," suggested the practical Stet.

## CHAPTER XII

### PERCY ST. CLAIR

Bob washed up, tidied himself a bit, and was soon ready to accompany Baker Mills to the hotel.

The latter was never very communicative on any subject. However, by vigorous pumping, Bob learned that Percy St. Clair had been a remarked and remarkable guest of the hostelry.

"He is what you might call a mixer," vouchsafed Mills. "He arrived at the hotel in charge of a surgeon, his foot all bound up, about a month ago. Had plenty of money and spent it liberally. Everybody liked him, for he was generous with his tips. Struck hard luck, shot up to the garret a story at a time, and left in debt. Yesterday he came back in a carriage, paid up, took the best room on the parlor floor, and this morning took the adjoining room. Took some chum in with him, I believe."

"I wonder what he wants to see me about?" mused Bob.

"Don't know, but he sent me. He's a queer fellow. Strikes me as a pretty capable young man gone wrong and reckless, though he has no bad habits except smoking cigarettes."

Baker Mills led Bob to a room on the second floor of the hotel, tapped at a door, and left him there.

"Come in," signaled a cheery voice.

Bob entered. He closed the door after him and stood for a moment critically surveying his host.

The stranger boy, this Percy St. Clair, sat in an armchair, one foot resting on a cushion on another chair, his crutch by his side.

He had always looked natty and neat when Bob had met him, but he was elaborately gotten up just now.

He wore a magnificently flowered smoking coat, and was puffing at his customary cigarette.

Trousers and vest were of a bright greenish hue, and his tie conspicuously brilliant.

By his side was a small stand. It held five

little paper boxes, and Percy St. Clair's hand rested on these.

He bowed with a pleasant smile to Bob, and indicated a chair near by. Then he scanned Bob from top to toe. There was a peculiar expression on his face as he did so.

"You sent for me, Mr.—"

"St. Clair," supplemented his host, with a wink. Good name, eh?"

"Is it yours?" asked Bob bluntly.

"It answers, does n't it? I sent for you, and I am much obliged to you for coming. It did n't do my cut foot any good tramping around town day before yesterday, and I won't get out for a day or two longer, the doctor says. That 's why I did n't call with that dollar I promised. Are you still in touch with our interesting young friend, the dog pound boy?"

"Yes, he is working for us now."

"Well, give him this, and explain my negligence, will you?"

Percy St. Clair drew a big roll of money from his pocket. He peeled off a bill and handed it to Bob.

"Hold on,'" demurred the latter, "this is ten dollars."

"Certainly."

"The bargain was one dollar."

"Technically, but I'm not mean. The boy furnished me my stake. I'm disposed to be liberal. Give him the ten."

"You're a good one!" said Bob.

"No, on the contrary I'm a bad one," admitted St. Clair in a hard way Bob did not like. "Never mind that. The next business. Will you do something for me?"

"I'll try."

"Walk to the door and back—spry, as if you were in a hurry."

"Is that a whim?" questioned Bob.

"Not at all."

"All right. Here I am on exhibition!"

Bob made the brief rapid journey with a light laugh.

St. Clair followed him keenly with his eyes. Bob observed that he looked more serious as he again beckoned him to the chair by his side.

"I thought so," said St. Clair—"you're it."

"Who am I?" demanded Bob.

St. Clair glanced at the corridor door and then at the one communicating with the next room.

He leaned over, looking Bob squarely in the eyes.

"See here, Haven," he spoke, "what did you do with that satchel?"

"Eh!" exclaimed Bob with a start—"oh," he steadied himself suddenly, "you know me, do you?"

"Yes, I thought I did the other day—I'm sure of it now. I didn't see your face that night at Parker's Pasture, but I'd know that quick athletic glide of yours anywhere. What became of the satchel, Haven?"

"I did as you requested—as I agreed," answered Bob.

"How?"

"I sunk it in the old oil well—three hundred feet down."

St. Clair seemed pleased, and nodded in a satisfied way.

"Thank you," he said.

Bob hoped he would offer some explanation

concerning the mysterious satchel and the tragic manœuvres of the night in question, but none was tendered.

Instead, St. Clair drew out his roll of bank notes again and took off three bills.

"I want to give you twenty-five dollars, Haven," he said.

"What for?"

"You did me a great service that night."

"Then I am glad."

"And I want to show my appreciation of your great kindness."

Bob put his hands resolutely behind him and shook his head.

"I don't accept pay for friendly services," he announced.

Percy St. Clair shrugged his shoulders and laughed in his hard, cynical way.

"You're wrong in that, Haven," he asserted—"but have your own way. You're all right anyhow. I thought it when I met you day before yesterday. I know it stronger than ever since this morning."

"Another thing," said Bob, after a thoughtful

pause, "it's a good deal of a mystery to me how you turn up so suddenly with a lot of money. When I saw you the other day you didn't have a cent."

"I told you I worked with my brains, didn't I?" demanded St. Clair with a shrewd chuckle. "I said that white dog was my stake? All right, I borrowed some paint and chemicals. I am very much up on dogs, and I have a vivid imagination. I ascertained who your easy citizens of culture were, and I played my little part—see?"

"You sold that dog to Colonel Harrington?"

"Oh, you know about it? Yes," unblushingly confessed St. Clair, "I did him up."

"Do you think that was quite the right thing to do?"

"Tainted money, eh?" jeered St. Clair. "Why so? Colonel Harrington has fifty so-called curios in his cabinets which I know to be forgeries. He is always haggling for rarities. Well, I gave him one. Am I any worse than the Dresden institute that sold him a Syrian relic that was made in a German factory?"

"Well," said Bob, "your fraud is known now. The colonel discovered it an hour ago."

"How was that?" inquired St. Clair with calm curiosity.

"It rained."

"Ha! ha! I see."

"He'll be after you. Colonel Harrington is a bad man to fool. I should n't wonder if he had you arrested."

"No, he won't," returned St. Clair coolly. "He can't afford to show himself up to be what he is—a pompous, ignorant person who thinks he is an art connoisseur and a sport."

"All the same," said Bob, arising, "I don't approve of your methods."

"I am quite out of your line, Haven," said St. Clair, "and I shall never intrude on you with any familiarity. I am not quite the worst in the world, though. But let that pass," continued the boy, with a sharp frown, as if his emotions were not pleasant ones. "I sent for you for another reason than all this."

He got to his feet and set his crutch under his arm.

"I've got a friend in that room yonder," he announced. "He's one of your good kind, like

yourself, and he saved me being thrown out of here three days before I was, by sharing his little all with me. I came back to find him down with a fever and penniless. I want you to see him."

"Do I know him, then?" inquired Bob in some astonishment.

"You do."

"Who is he?"

"His name is Augustus Chase. He asked me to send for you. He wants to see you."

"I wonder what for?" spoke Bob wonderingly, almost to himself.

"He wants to sell you his newspaper."

Bob Haven experienced a thrill. An eager light shot into his eyes and his heart beat faster—it seemed as if he had caught a momentary glimpse of some fair promised land.

# CHAPTER XIII

## A GOLDEN DREAM

BART STIRLING, slipping from the afternoon express at the Pleasantville depot, found a special deputation awaiting his arrival.

His friends had been advised of his intended visit to the home folks. As Bart alighted from the train with a cheery nod to the depot master and a friendly word for the special watchman, either arm was seized in a firm grasp.

Darry Haven imprisoned him on one side and Bob on the other. Their faces showed unusual animation.

"Waiting for you, Bart," said Darry.

"Yes, we want you—bad!" put in Bob.

Bart detached a hand and consulted his watch.

"I can't give you much time, fellows," he said—"that is, not right away. Something particular?"

"Vital," declared Darry seriously.

"Our whole future is in the balance," insisted Bob melodramatically, "and we want you to tip the scales."

"Always at your service," said Bart cheerily, "but I've got to begin an audit of the books at the express office here and report by wire to-night to headquarters. It is three o'clock now. Can't you fix it for this evening?"

"That will do," answered Darry. "We're pretty anxious, Bart. A big thing may be coming our way. There's lots to think of and arrange, and we want your advice. We heard this morning that you would be here, and waited especially for you."

"Say seven o'clock, then," suggested Bart, "and I'll give you till midnight, if it is necessary."

"Good," nodded Bob—"at the office."

"All right."

Bart went briskly about his duties. He was winning his way fast. Bart had the confidence of his superiors, and they assigned him occasional outside duties that were very pleasing.

Bart's practical experience as a thorough express agent had stood him in good stead. He made a first-class assistant manager at the city office. Recently they had sent him out on little jaunts like the present one.

He made a kind of inspection and auditing visit to fourth-rate offices. Pleasantville was higher in the scale, but Bart had been in charge there once, his father now superintended it, and his familiarity with its affairs, the company decided, would enable him to make a very intelligent inspection.

They always allowed him two or three days for such trips. In the present instance, where his duties took him home, it was a sort of vacation.

Bart had kept in touch with Haven Brothers. He had brought and sent them a good deal of work from the city. They had always asked his advice when they contemplated any important move.

From the manner of Darry and Bob at the railroad depot, Bart knew that they had something of more than usual interest in view.

He was, therefore, quite curious and expectant

as he neared the printing shop at precisely seven o'clock that evening.

The office lamp burned brightly, the press and paper cutter were burnished up to the highest possible polish. Everything was neat, clean and in order.

Darry and Bob were at the office desk awaiting him. The place looked prosperous and inviting.

Soon the three fast friends were seated in a semicircle, the cool pure breeze sweeping refreshingly through the open windows.

"Now then, what's your news?" challenged Bart brightly.

Darry hesitated as if to select his words. Bob anticipated him impulsively.

"We want to print a newspaper," he blurted out.

"Good," nodded Bart quietly. "I fancied you would finally reach that conclusion."

"Then you approve of it?" inquired Darry eagerly.

"That depends," answered Bart cautiously. "A weekly, of course?"

"Yes."

"Well, fellows, a weekly newspaper is one of two things—pretty good, or awfully bad."

"We know that," said Darry seriously, "and any idea of our graduating from printers to publishers would be premature if a certain chance had n't come along. We are doing famously in the job printing line, Bart. We are making money and saving some of it. Bob is a trump at managing the shop. I seem to be making new friends every day. Still, Bob is crazy over the publishing idea."

"I am," confessed Bob frankly. "It 's been the dream of my life, to run a newspaper. There 's a field here, too, Bart, don't you really think so?"

"I think the *Eagle* is getting more mossbacky every issue," said Bart plumply.

"That 's one thing," continued Bob. "The other is: our great chance."

"What is the chance, Bob?"

"Just this: you remember Augustus Chase?"

"And his society weekly? Surely."

"Well, he has practically busted up. He owes a lot of money. He has been getting out his

paper later and later and worse and worse looking every week. He 's lost his nerve and half his advertisements. The paper is almost a wreck."

"Where are his backers?"

"They 've dropped him. He 's been sick and discouraged, and has n't lauded up the social stars the way they wanted it."

"I never thought there was room for an exclusively society paper here," said Bart.

"Neither did I," echoed Bob, "but here 's the point: how for a nucleus? The *Journal* has four hundred paid subscribers. That 's a pretty fine circulation for a start. The plant is all right. The press is first-class, prints thirty-two by forty-four, and the office equipment is practically new."

"I understand he put two thousand dollars into the business originally," said Bart.

"Well," resumed Bob, "I say this: if we can get hold of that plant, put some new life into the paper and change the name and get into the regular weekly field, it 's a snap on the terms offered."

"What are the terms offered?" questioned Bart.

"Why, it seems that Chase feels very grateful

to us for helping him out on his paper. He hates Mackey and Carson of the *Eagle*. They have blocked him all the way through—they have him now in their clutches, in fact. He sent for me yesterday—he's sick up at the hotel. He made me a proposition. He said there was value in the weekly and he did n't want to see it wasted. What was more, he would n't let the *Eagle* crew wreck it. He owes, in round figures, six hundred and fifty dollars. Of this two hundred and fifty are claims that Mackey of the *Eagle* has been secretly buying up to get a hold on him. There are four hundred dollars distributed among creditors who will wait for their money, two hundred dollars a purchase mortgage on the press. The docter says that he must get south for his health."

"What does he propose?" inquired Bart, becoming very much interested.

"He says that if we can raise the two hundred and fifty dollars due the *Eagle* people and give him one hundred dollars cash, he will turn the whole business over to us."

"Leaving four hundred dollars to pay later?" said Bart musingly.

"That's it," nodded Darry.

Bart took up a tab of blank paper and figured thoughtfully.

"Well, what do you think of it?" asked Darry anxiously, as the pencil was suspended in air.

"I think as Bob does," answered Bart. "It's a snap."

"Good for you!" commended Bob, with a beaming face.

"Can you manage the money part of it?" questioned Bart.

"Just," answered Bob promptly. "The folks have four hundred dollars in the bank. They are willing to risk it. We have a little surplus for running expenses. You see, Bart, we would continue the job printing line."

"Oh, you must keep that up," advised Bart readily. "The job printing department is the saving clause in the average weekly newspaper office."

Darry expressed a vast sigh of satisfaction at his friend's encouragement while Bob looked radiant.

"We'll show them a real newspaper!" the latter chuckled.

"Could you give us an hour in the morning, Bart?" asked Darry.

"I think so."

"Father says he would like to have you to stay by us to see that we make the deal legally, and all that."

"All right," said Bart.

Bob got up and shuffled about with a gay dancing step. Bart smiled indulgently. He could fancy all the extravagant newspaper ideas floating about in the vivid imagination of the active young typo.

"Why!" exclaimed Darry springing to his feet suddenly, "what's this?"

There was a rattling of the cinders on the path outside, a gasping sound.

The next instant Stet bolted through the doorway at cannon-shot speed.

"S—say!" he ejaculated, running squarely against a chair and flopping there.

"For mercy's sake, what's the row?" ejaculated Bob, staring in amazement at Stet.

The latter was wild-eyed and pale. He had been running furiously and was all out of breath.

His collar was torn awry, his face was streaked with blood and his clothing covered with mud.

Darry seized him by the shoulder and gave him a vigorous shake.

"What have you been up to now?" he demanded severely.

Stet rolled his eyes prodigiously, gave a gasp, and said dolorously:

"No go!"

"Eh, what's no go?" challenged Bob.

"The *Society Journal*."

Bob started with apprehension.

"Out with it!" he cried—"what are you getting at?"

"The gig's up. You're blocked sure. The game's queered," announced Stet in spasmodic sections. "Hemp Carson has nailed the *Journal* for keeps!"

## CHAPTER XIV

### TOO LATE

"See here!" cried Bob Haven, "what do you mean?"

Stet gulped alarmingly.

"It's just as I say," he declared. The *Eagle* people have gobbled up the *Journal*."

Darry looked alarmed, Bob dismayed, Bart serious.

"How do you know that?" questioned the latter.

"Oh, it's so," insisted Stet. "Lemme tell my story."

"Tell it," ordered Darry sharply.

"I was lying down on the grass on the common," narrated Stet, "when I saw Hemp Carson and a constable come along. Hemp's new boy at the office, Jeff, was with him, but he sort of made himself promiscuous. He had a ham-

mer and a paper of nails in his hand. I lost sight of him when I heard Hemp mention Haven Brothers."

"What did he say?" pressed Bob.

"I caught only the name just then. It was coupled with Chase and the *Society Journal.* That set me suspicious. They had just come out of the bar of the hotel. Hemp treated the constable to a cigar. They sat down on one of the benches. I crept up behind them. Then Hemp laughed in a cunning way. He said that fixed Augustus Chase, and settled the score against Haven Brothers."

"What was 'that,' Stet?" inquired Bart.

"What he'd just done."

"Did you learn what it was?"

"Yes, they'd been to the justice shop and got out a detachment."

"Detachment of what—constables?" asked Darry.

"He probably means an attachment," corrected Bart.

"Yes, that's it an attachment," nodded Stet. "They'd nailed it on to the door of the *Society*

*Journal* office. That shuts the place and puts it in the hands of a cuss—a cuss something."

"Custodian."

"Yes. Then to-morrow they get out posters saying that the *Society Journal* will be sold at auction in ten days."

Darry drew a long, anxious breath. He glanced at Bart, who looked pretty serious.

Poor Bob's face was working with mixed emotions of disappointment and apprehension.

"Too bad," murmured Darry.

"Too late, it seems," added Bart. "It's a pity you hadn't closed the bargain."

"Would it have made a difference?"

"It would have shut the *Eagle* people out entirely, if you had paid their claims!"

"Supposing we offer them the money now?" suggested Bob.

"I doubt if they would take it. No," continued Bart decisively, "they have taken this legal step, and it practically places the business in bankruptcy."

"Then our chance is gone!" cried Bob bitterly.

"Not at all," answered Bart. "Of course the *Eagle* people expect to bid it in. It would pay them to do it and kill off a rival. It is just a question as to how much interest the outside creditors will take in the matter, but I should say the property will certainly bring the amount of the indebtedness."

"Six hundred and fifty dollars," spoke Darry thoughtfully.

"Let's raise it, then!" cried Bob, pacing the floor in a fever of excitement. "The cylinder press cost more than that alone."

"Where are we going to raise six hundred and fifty dollars?" demanded Darry dubiously.

"The folks have four hundred dollars in the bank. I know mother could scrape up another hundred. We have seventy-five dollars cash, fifty dollars out in bills, and can surely get in twenty-five dollars worth of work in the next week. That's six hundred and fifty, is'nt it?"

"Suppose it," answered Darry, "where is your surplus for running expenses?"

"Well, we can arrange," persisted Bob doggedly. "I—I'll sell my bicycle. The one I paid four

dollars for at the express auction. It will surely bring thirty dollars."

"Not enough," broke in Bart. "Keep your wheel, Bob. Tell you, Darry," he continued, "I've got one hundred dollars in the savings bank. I'll loan that to you."

"Thank you, Bart," said Darry. "This new phase of affairs has knocked me out completely. Supposing those *Eagle* people won't let the property go out of their hands at any price? Suppose they bid it up to one thousand dollars—twelve hundred dollars?"

"Then they'll be paying for a very expensive whistle so far as they are concerned," observed Bart, "and Chase will get more money."

"They have learned that we are in the field, I'll bet," said Bob.

"Stay in the field, then," answered Bart. "If you can't possibly get the Chase plant, figure to get one of your own. You've got the field, haven't you? See here, fellows, don't look so glum. Where there is a will there is a way. You can accomplish almost anything that is right in this world by sticking to it. You have

ten days to muster your forces, and pretty near eight hundred dollars in sight. Take it easy, but keep your eyes open. You don't know what may turn up."

Bart's encouraging words brightened up things considerably. The vital subject of the moment was temporarily dropped, pending an investigation into the causes of Stet's disorganized condition.

"You have been fighting again?" said Darry severely.

"Had to," grinned Stet. "And it was n't my fault. When I crept away from that bench on the common, I knew I must lose no time in getting word to you. First thing I knew someone grabbed me."

"Hemp Carson?"

"No, his new office boy, Jeff. He had been watching me, it seems. He yelled to Hemp that I was a spy. All hands started for me. Jeff hit me with the hammer. That was enough. I thought of the news I had to tell you and I struck out—once, honest, only once," declared Stet solemnly—"but I must have knocked him twenty feet."

Darry tried to take things hopefully. The new complication in affairs, however, set Bob on nettles.

Bart had to leave Pleasantville the next evening, but he told Darry he would make arrangements to be back the day of the auction, even if he had to get a special leave.

"Keep your courage up," he said—"there will be a way out yet."

Saturday afternoon all Pleasantville went on a picnic. Haven Brothers closed shop and joined the general procession.

The usual boat races on the river were a great feature in home athletics. Bob took part as a member of the crack club. Darry was also a member, but had gotten out of practice and had suggested a substitute.

The river banks were lined. It was a scene of gayety and diversion. Darry piloted the little coterie under his charge, comprising his mother and Bart Stirling's sisters, to a good view place on the bridge.

All kinds of craft dotted the river. Darry had to smile at one boat that made itself even more conspicuous than the regatta specials.

It was rowed by a river boatman, a big, husky fellow, and in the stern sat Hemp Carson.

He was in his glory. He had set up a purple flag at the bow bearing the impressive words: "*Press Boat.*"

He was evidently waiting for some grand company from the social set of the town, and went hither and thither. He looked dreadfully important. Every once in a while he would stand up in the boat, bring out a tab of paper, and make a great show of taking notes.

Then he would sit down in the stern, direct his oarsman to proceed, and was apparently busy in scribbling off "hurry copy" for his paper—which, by the way, would not be printed for four days.

"The big fraud!" murmured Darry, watching Hemp's manœuvres. "No—the big chump. Stand aside!"

"Darry!" cried his mother in alarm.

"My coat!" shot out Darry, stripping it off and throwing it into Bertha Stirling's arms.

His words were drowned in a great cry, ringing spontaneously from the crowds lining the banks.

From the bridge they could not view the general prospect quite so well, but Darry had seen enough, and had acted.

The Press Boat oarsman was engrossed in driving his craft ahead with swift, powerful strokes.

It was Carson's duty to steer and direct, but the manager of the *Eagle* Job Print was absorbed in making his "grand stand play" of showing off his reportorial attainments.

Thus it was that the Press Boat, driving ahead, ran with a resounding crash into a little skiff directly in its course.

The occupants of the latter craft were a well-dressed man and his wife, strangers in Pleasantville.

They were drifting and watching the starting-point when the contact came.

In one flash their boat went over, and both were spilled out.

The Press Boat drove ahead. Hemp Carson simply looked back in a stupid, loutish way.

The man sank, came up, grasped the overturned boat and clung there. Bart saw from his terror and actions that he was no swimmer.

His wife went down also, and came up twenty feet farther down stream.

She was about ten yards from the bridge. With a gurgling scream she threw up her hands, and then sank again.

"Out of the way!" shouted Darry.

He recklessly pulled the crowd, three-deep, from the bridge railing.

With a spring he landed on the top stringer on tiptoe. Balancing there for an instant, watching the water twenty feet below, calculating closely, Darry waited till the woman's frantic face appeared once again on the surface.

A fearful hush had supervened along the crowded river banks.

A great gasping breath went out as Darry Haven dived headlong.

# CHAPTER XV

## BRAVE DARRY

DARRY's sure-poised body parted the water like a knife. For half a minute he was under the surface.

When he came up he shook the water from his face. He glanced quickly around. Then he made two masterly strokes, and reached and grasped the woman as she was sinking again.

She was unwieldy from her weight, and her frantic hands clawed out to clutch him.

"Don't grab me, don't struggle," warned Darry quickly. "Do just as I say, and you will be safe."

"Oh, yes! yes!" she gasped—"save me! save me!"

Something in his firm tone and manner, in his confident young face, influenced the woman to be reasonable and obedient.

Darry held one arm across her chest extended

upward under her left arm, his fingers clutching the dress at her right shoulder.

"Hold your breath and keep your chin well up," he said. "Splendid—you are a sensible lady," he encouraged. "Now then!"

The overturned boat was fully twenty feet away. The Press Boat had turned towards them.

"You clown!" murmured Darry between his teeth, as he noted Hemp Carson glaring stupidly at them. "Nearer!" he shouted. "Do you want us to sink?"

Carson's oarsman drove the boat rapidly towards Bart, who trod water, easily supporting his burden for the moment.

Suddenly the selfish-souled Carson half arose. He spread his big hand towards his oarsman.

"Don't you go near them!" he quavered—"don't you risk it. They'll tip us over. They'll wet the cushions."

"Sit down, boss, and I'll manage," spoke the boatman.

"No!" cried Hemp—"row me ashore first."

"You cur!" shouted Darry. "Boatman, give me the side of the boat, I won't tip you."

Hemp Carson arose, and fell full-length. He struggled in his terror like a madman.

In his efforts to prevent the boatman from endangering his precious life by going near the refugees, he unshipped both oars.

They floated away, and Carson, bellowing like a bull, looked shorewards, screaming for assistance.

The boatman, an old river veteran, gave him an angry shove, knocking him to the bottom of the boat again.

He tried to rock the boat towards Darry, but the current carried both evenly, and he made no progress.

Darry glanced at the overturned boat. The lady's husband, helpless to give them assistance, looked despairingly towards them.

"It's shore or nothing," muttered Darry.

"Madam, you are doing superbly. Now, just drift easily."

The lady was shaking like a leaf and her face was terror-stricken. Darry's confidence-inspiring nerve, however, made her follow his directions implicitly.

She was simply quiescent. This was all Darry wished. He was a fine swimmer. He balanced her just right, and struck out with one hand.

Twice he had to momentarily drop her and use both hands to keep from going down.

"Safe," he panted finally, and gave her a vigorous push. His feet had touched bottom.

A dozen people rushed knee-deep down the sloping bank to lift the floating woman.

Then a cheer went up. Darry Haven felt his very soul thrill.

Never in the history of all the boat races of ten years had such a fervent, unanimous acclamation rent the air.

His work was but half completed, however. As tender-hearted women bore the fainting lady he had rescued up the shore, Darry sprang to dry land.

He fairly upset some gawking rustics from the end of a long light bench.

With a whirl he sent it into the water. He sprang in himself after it.

It was all easy work, now. Darry directed it like a floating plank towards the overturned boat.

"Grab it," he directed to the man clinging to the rolling craft. "That's it. Your wife is all right, sir. Now then, just hold on, that's all."

Darry drove his impromptu raft and its unskilled burden ashore. A boat was putting out to rescue the craven, Carson.

Darry caught at its side and swung into the company of its single oarsman.

He was mad all over. Never in his life had he witnessed such pusillanimous cowardice as that exhibited by Hemp Carson.

He felt that he must give the ignoble miscreant a dressing down to relieve his outraged spirits.

Darry rescued the floating oars. He threw them over into the Press Boat and grabbed its side.

"Get off the earth, you scum!" he blazed out at the shrinking Carson. "Rather, get him to dry earth," supplemented Darry to the old boatman, "and never disgrace your calling by taking such carrion aboard again."

Hemp Carson did not venture a word in

reply. He slunk down in the yawl. In a shamed undertone he directed his oarsman to put him ashore at an obscure spot.

Mrs. Haven was anxiously solicitous as Darry returned to her side. It was not easy to reach her.

Big men slapped him on the shoulder with a cheer. A drove of small boys hung at his heels, giving utterance to enthusiastic yells.

The Stirling girls viewed Darry with bright, commending eyes. They were very proud of their heroic young escort.

Mrs. Haven insisted that Darry go straight home and change his attire.

This he did. The races were on when he returned to the river. The rescue incident was obscured in the excitement of the regatta, and the man and woman he had saved had disappeared.

A timekeeper came up to Darry after the races were over.

"I have a card for you, Haven," he said. "That gentleman you saved asked me to hand it to you. His name is David Barnes. He

belongs in Rockport, and took his wife at once to the hotel. He said they would leave on the first train and might not see you. But he would see you later. He would remember you."

"I hope pleasantly," observed Darry in his usual cheery way, "for he spent a pretty bad quarter of an hour hugging that slippery boat keel."

Bob's crew had won the day. They were exuberant and crowed over the victory. The diversion from printing office routine did Bob good.

As he was leaving the boathouse he edged up to a crowd surrounding somebody standing on a box in their center.

This person had a high portable table before him. It's top was covered with a piece of black velvet.

He juggled five little paper boxes in his hands. Bob had seen those boxes before—at the town hotel.

The manipulator was that "chevalier of industry," Percy St. Clair.

He was announcing "the last chance of the day" as Bob came up.

St. Clair would take out a two-dollar bill and a one-dollar bill.

These he would put in two of the boxes, mix the five boxes up in a nimble fashion, and offer a pick for fifty cents.

One of these boxes would seem to show the merest end of one of the greenbacks.

Half a dozen countrymen took chances, to invariably pick out an empty box.

St. Clair coolly pocketed his gains, closed up his handy apparatus, and left the scene.

Bob looked pretty severe. He glanced after him and then followed.

"Hi, there, St. Clair," he hailed.

St. Clair paused, turned, and gave a stony stare that petrified Bob.

"Speaking to me?" propounded St. Clair, without the slightest token of recognition.

"Don't you know it?"

"Must be mistaken in the person," announced St. Clair, proceeding on his way.

"You hold on," said Bob, hotly pursuing and

checking him. "You'll listen to me. I am ashamed of you, St. Clair! You were made for better things than this business."

"What business?" jeered St. Clair, with a hard, cynical laugh.

"This gambling game, if you will have it," retorted Bob bluntly.

"You can't offend me, Haven," asserted St. Clair calmly—"I like you too well. I'm following my trade—it's the only one I ever learned. Can't help it. I won't starve. Those fellows take their chances."

"It's worse than the zebra dog!" proclaimed Bob.

"Oh, that?" said St. Clair with a chuckle and a shrug. "I suppose you'd think I was lying if I told you that although I coaxed two hundred dollars out of that royal chump and humbug, Colonel Harrington, I saved him ten thousand dollars."

"Saved him ten thousand dollars?" repeated Bob vaguely.

"I did, and you helped."

"I helped!" exclaimed Bob.

"You did."

"Again—how?"

"By sinking that satchel in the well on Parker's Pasture," answered St. Clair impressively. "Let that pass. It is true. For the rest, a word of advice, Haven: I like you. I wish my fate was yours, a decent, honest life, but—"

St. Clair swallowed a lump in his throat.

"Cut it out!" he growled savagely. "It was n't to be. Only, one word of advice: Don't recognize me—you can't afford it."

And, turning on his heel, the strange fellow walked rapidly away.

# CHAPTER XVI

## AT THE AUCTION

The great day had arrived. The *Society Journal* was to be sold at auction to the highest bidder at two o'clock in the afternoon.

Haven Brothers felt that the critical crisis in their lives had arrived. They were prepared to act accordingly.

About all Darry and Bob had thought and talked of for nearly two weeks was the approaching auction sale.

The job printing business had picked up wonderfully. Haven Brothers were doing a rushing trade in that line. Four nights in succession both partners had to work till midnight to get out some hurry orders. Young Stet helped them in a loyal way.

The episode of the river races had been the talk of the town for several days. It directed

attention to Haven Brothers and brought them some new business.

The *Eagle* had studiously avoided any reference to it. In fact, Hemp Carson sneaked out of town for a day or two.

The *Eagle* had a wretched account of the races. This led to considerable criticism of "that old fogy, Jasper Mackey," and convinced the Haven boys more than ever that the town was ready for a live, wide-awake newspaper.

Stet had done considerable "nosing around" on his own hook. He was a natural-born ferret, and incipiently had the instincts of a great detective.

"Tell you," he announced to Bob that morning, "I got the ins and outs of the whole attachment business. Hemp Carson meant to play the *Eagle* dirt. He put up the scheme so a backer could get the Chase outfit for him. Then he was going to leave Mackey in the lurch and start a rival paper."

"Is n't he now?" questioned Bob.

"He can't. I heard Mackey called him down good and proper. They had an awful row.

Mackey found out who the backer was and broke up the arrangement."

At noon that day work was suspended at the little print shop. Both Darry and Bob were dressed up, and at one o'clock Bart Stirling, arrived on the noon train, put in an appearance.

There was a busy time going over the situation. All the pros and cons were discussed. Bart was as much interested as if he had a personal share in the matter.

"The hard, solid fact is that we stop bidding at seven hundred dollars," said Darry.

"Made it eight hundred," corrected Bart. "I've brought one hundred dollars. I shall take pleasure in loaning it to you indefinitely. I don't think the plant will sell for more than seven hundred dollars."

"You don't know Jasper Mackey," observed Darry.

"You mean Hemp Carson," supplemented Bob. "He hates us like poison. Since that river business he can't say anything impish enough about us."

The sale was to take place at the office of the *Society Journal.*

When the boys arrived there they found quite a throng gathered.

The auctioneer was the constable. When they entered the room the boys found him in consultation with Hemp Carson, who had taken up a prominent seat on an imposing stone.

Bart went around with his friends looking over the general equipment.

"It pans out better that I ever thought," declared Darry. "Bart, we must get this outfit."

"We've just got to, and that's all there is about it," insisted Bob. "Offer the whole eight hundred dollars, Darry."

The constable got up on the press platform and rapped with a brass rule.

"Order, gentlemen," he commanded. "You have all read the advertisement: 'No division of the equipment, and terms spot cash.' What do you start the bid at on the bulk outfit?"

The town hardware man was the first bidder at two hundred dollars.

A junk dealer raised this fifty dollars, and subsided.

"Three hundred and fifty," said Hemp Carson in his sing song, tobacco-stained voice.

A clerk from the bank consulted a slip of paper in his hand.

"Four hundred dollars," he said in a bored tone.

"Four hundred and fifty," promptly put in Carson.

The bank clerk shrugged his shoulders and departed. Evidently some city firm had wired a limit bid, and his duties were performed.

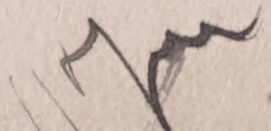
There was a pause. The constable looked knowingly at Hemp.

"Four hundred and fifty dollars," he announced, and raised his rule significantly.

"Five hundred," said Darry Haven.

"Hello!" snarled Hemp Carson, turning on his young rival venomously—"you fellows on deck?"

"Yes," retorted Bob spicily. "Did you think we were under deck—or in the bottom of the boat?"



Hemp Carson reddened at the telling allusion.

"Six hundred dollars!" he snapped out.

"Six hundred and twenty-five," said Darry.

"Six hundred and fifty."

Darry drew an anxious breath.

"Seven hundred," he bid.

Hemp Carson jumped down from the press. He was aroused. All his hatred of the Haven boys showed in his evil face.

"Eight hundred dollars!" he shouted, slapping his fist on a typecase.

Bob uttered a groan.

"It's all up," whispered Darry in a sinking tone to Bart.

"Eight hundred and twenty-five," said Bart.

"Nine hundred dollars!" yelled Hemp Carson.

"There was a long pause.

"One thousand dollars!"

A sort of thrill went through the crowd. It was pretty active bidding for Pleasantville.

Hemp Carson turned around with a glare. A fine-looking, neatly-dressed gentleman at the rear of the room had spoken the words.

Hemp was evidently impressed with his prosperous appearance. He dug into his bulging pocket, fluttered, fumbled, and in a lack-hearted way said:

"One thousand and five."

"One thousand and fifty," quietly remarked the gentleman.

Hemp Carson looked savage.

"It 's cash!" he gritted.

"Spot cash, of course," nodded the gentleman sweetly.

Bob stared wonderingly at the new bidder.

Bart's eyes were bright. His half-parted lips showed that his breath was coming quickly.

Darry was a picture of puzzled wonderment. In a glance he recognized the gentleman. Bob divined this.

"Darry," he whispered, "who is it?"

"Mr. David Barnes, the gentleman who fell into the river from the boat."

"Oh—why—"

"Going, going—*gone!*" sang out the auctioneer, after an inquisitive glance at Hemp Carson, who shook his head dejectedly and slunk from the room.

"Gone for ten hundred and fifty dollars," continued the auctioneer, "and sold to—"

"Haven Brothers. There's your money. My young friend, how do you do?"

The speaker had drawn out a wallet. Then he stepped forward and extended his hand to Darry with a bright smile.

"I—I hardly knew you," stammered Darry, understanding the situation but too overcome to grasp it all in a moment.

"Darry," cried the palpitating Bob, "does he mean—"

"I mean, young man," observed Mr. David Barnes, "that I have bought this plant as a slight token of the estimation in which I hold this brave friend, who saved my life and the life of my wife."

## CHAPTER XVII

### FREE ADVERTISING

"ARE you crazy, Stet?"

"No, only proud—hooray!"

"See here, Stet, you'll rouse the town!"

"Intend to! Does she blaze? hooray! Will the *Eagle* people see it?—whoop! Maybe they'll run it down as 'a disastrous conflagration,' and get out an extra. Whoop! *hooray!*"

Bob Haven's mind was in a wild fever over the events of the day, but Stet discounted his excitement and the emotion ten to one.

It was seven o'clock in the evening, and Bob, Darry and Bart Stirling were homeward bound.

They were all tired, for the day had been one of intense strain.

Its pleasant ending, however, had imparted a sweet satisfaction that made fatigue a luxury.

Mr. David Barnes had proven himelf a royal

friend, indeed. He had paid the one thousand and fifty dollars bid on the *Society Journal* plant in cash.

He had seen to it that in due legal form the property was conveyed by court sanction to Haven Brothers, or, rather, to Mr. George Haven, their father and representative, Darry and Bob being under age.

Then he had invited the three boys to the hotel to a neat little luncheon. He seemed to experience a placid delight in listening to the plans of the enthusiastic "Boy Publishers," as he termed them.

Darry insisted on one point. He would not budge from this position: They could not accept the liberal assistance of Mr. Barnes except as a temporary accommodation.

Mr. Barnes with reluctancy finally consented to allow them to pay him three hundred and fifty dollars cash. They also gave him a note for seven hundred dollars.

"That is business, Mr. Barnes," insisted Darry. "We would not feel half as ambitious or independent if we accepted that plant as a gift."

"I shall never press payment on this note," declared the Rockport manufacturer decisively.

"It will be paid, all the same," said Darry.

"I shall have to lose that note, young man!" solemnly insisted Mr. Barnes.

"Then you will put us to the trouble of sending you a new one," laughed Darry. "Mr. Barnes, you have done us the service of our lives. You have made it possible for us to get hold of this newspaper plant. Let us work out our own salvation, now we are encouraged by the confidence of so good a friend as you have been to us."

"I agree," said Mr. Barnes, "on one restriction: that if you run up against any snags, if you need more capital, I shall be the first person you will apply to."

"I promise that, sir," pledged Darry.

When Mr. Barnes left them to catch the evening train for Rockport, he invited all three of them to call upon Mrs. Barnes and himself whenever they came to the city.

"You, being located there," said Mr. Barnes to Bart, "I hope to see often. I feel pretty glad that my accidental meeting with you put me in posses-

sion of certain facts. They enabled me to be here on time. Good-bye, my friends, and godspeed to your splendid enterprise!"

"He's a trump!" burst out Bob enthusiastically, as Mr. Barnes stepped into a cab *en route* for the railway depot.

"See here, Mr. Bart Stirling," challenged Darry Haven, turning promptly on the young express manager, "what's this secret?"

"What secret?" smiled Bart coolly, but with a telltale blush.

"No bluffing, now!" persisted Darry. "What did Mr. Barnes mean when he referred to a certain accidental meeting with you at Rockport?"

"Oh, that's all right," said Bart frankly. "You remember sending me an order for some blank account books for the grocers here?"

"Yes," nodded Darry.

"Well, Mr. Barnes is of Barnes & Brayton, manufacturers of loose-leaf ledgers and the like. I was in their place. After ordering the blank books you wanted, I directed them to be expressed to you at Pleasantville. The order

and the cash went to the office. While I was waiting for the receipt, word came from Mr. Barnes that he wished to see me. It seems he heard the bookkeeper mention Pleasantville, and had glanced at the order.

"I see," murmured Darry.

"He made me sit down in his private office," narrated Bart. "He asked me all about Pleasantville. He asked me all about you. In fact, before I was aware of it he was in possession of all the facts about your plans, your hopes, and the auction. I fancied he intended to do something for you. I even believe if he had not got here in time for the auction, he would have insisted on starting you in with a brand-new newspaper outfit."

It was just at dusk after this little colloquy that the trio, homeward bound, had their attention directed to a great flare in the direction of the old carpenter shop.

They hurried their steps. As soon as they got on the main street, however, they discovered that the glare was that of a great bonfire.

It was as they reached the roaring, spark-spit-

ting pile of tar barrels and dry goods boxes that Bob discovered Stet.

Stet had "heard the news." It was soon "all over town."

He had collected a big boyish contingent, and they were "celebrating."

To inquiring pedestrians seeking the cause of the same, the noisy mob announced that they were signalizing the advent of a new newspaper—"twict the size of the *Eagle*," and "mebbe a daily."

Haven Brothers were compelled to leave the jubilating Stet to his own devises.

"The free advertising won't do you any harm," Bart advised the boy publishers.

The next morning, however, they were somewhat serious over the pernicious enterprise and activity of their loyal young cohort.

As the grinning Stet himself audaciously admitted, he had "rubbed it into the *Eagle* good and hard."

His mob of assistants had got paper and marking ink. The *Eagle* door bore the blurred announcement: "Dying of dry rot."

On the *Eagle* bulletin board was the second

scrawled legend: "Buy the new weekly—out next week."

In addition to this, they had met Hemp Carson. The manager of the *Eagle* Job Print had sought to drown his troubles after the auction was over. He was unable to tell friend from enemy. He was induced by the motley urchins to make a show of himself by mounting an old wagon and delivering a maudlin speech.

This last effort overcame him. The wagon was drawn by the unruly mob under a conspicuous arc light near the hotel.

They posed the unconscious Hemp on the wagon seat. They decorated his hat with turkey feathers and his cheeks and chin with marking ink. Across his breast they printed a big scrawl, reading: "Dead Duck."

Bart Stirling gave Darry and Bob his time and services all the next day.

There was a great deal to consider, a great deal to do.

They formulated their plans in detail. Haven Brothers found they had assumed no trivial responsibility.

System, industry and common sense, however, promised to make the road smooth and easy.

By the following Saturday, though at considerable expense, the entire Chase plant was removed to the old carpenter shop.

The job printing department was transferred to the second story, which was fitted up snugly.

The newspaper cylinder press had to be taken apart and set up again after removal. They had to send to the city for a man to perform this expert work.

The following Monday morning a neat, modest circular was sent through the mails to the business men and general residents of the town.

It announced that the following week Haven Brothers would ask their patronage for a new, live, up-to-date weekly newspaper, to be known as the Pleasantville *Herald*.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### A PLOT OF THE ENEMY

"EXPRESS office?"

"Yes."

"Is that you, Mr. Stirling? Please rush that paper, will you?"

"Is this Bob Haven? Your paper came in on the noon train."

"I know it did."

"And went out on the two o'clock delivery."

"Thanks."

Bob had gone into the store nearest to the printing office to call up by telephone the express office at which Bart Stirling's father was agent.

He hurried back to the old carpenter shop. Darry turned from the desk.

"Are they going to hurry that paper?" he inquired.

"Mr. Stirling said it went out on the afternoon

delivery," reported Bob. "I suppose the express-man has heavy deliveries, and has n't got around to us yet."

Darry glanced at his watch. It was half past five, and near quitting time.

"We have a big day before us to-morrow," continued Bob, with a restless, anxious air. "The paper must be dampened to-night, you know. If the fellow does n't hurry, we won't get home till seven o'clock."

Darry always adopted soothing tactics when his brother was disturbed.

"Take it cool, Bob," he advised pleasantly. "We have n't had much to complain of as amateur publishers."

"Amateur?" cried Bob indignantly. "I don't claim that class. If we are n't full-fledged professionals, who is? Darry, is n't it a peach?" and Bob with sparkling eyes surveyed the forms on the composing stone.

It held two chases, each locking up two pages. That somber mass of metal represented a heap of hard work.

The cylinder press was a six-quarto, printing a

thirty by forty-four inch sheet. By this same hour to-morrow, Haven Brothers expected to give to a waiting world the first issue of the Pleasantville weekly *Herald*.

It was only by industry, intelligence and a natural knack that they had been able to reach the culminating point in the first stage of their new enterprise.

The removal of the Chase plant had involved time, care and expense, and they had felt themselves very fortunate in having a surplus fund at the bank to draw on.

Augustus Chase, much better off than he had anticipated in a money way, had left Pleasantville.

Bart, in the city, had been diligent and prompt in executing various important commissions for the boys.

Mrs. Haven, skillful artist that she was, had designed a neat pictorial heading for the new paper, Bart had ordered an electrotype of this at Rockport, forwarding it to the boys.

Mr. Haven had revived his old editorial routine. He had written some splendid timely articles for the *Herald*.

The *Eagle* was an old style four-page paper. The *Herald* was to have eight pages.

Four of these were set up at the office. A city auxiliary print establishment supplied the paper, printed on one side with select general matter.

Now, everything was ready. The press was operated by a crank, and had been fully tested.

Darry had acted as manager and reporter. He had made many good friends for the paper.

For some time past the *Eagle* had been making enemies. It had been hammering some worthy local officials and private parties. It had attacked a local merchant, and printed a mean article about himself and his family because he had refused to take increased advertising space.

This gentleman, naturally indignant, had at once gone over with his support to the new paper, and he had influenced other merchants to join him. The *Herald* would appear on the market with two columns of bona fide advertisements.

There was, too, another feature which the boys kept very secret.

As the reader already knows, Mrs. Haven was regularly engaged to draw fashion pictures for a city firm.

That week there was a town meeting of importance at Pleasantville, followed by a procession of the fire department and one or two local political societies.

Mrs. Haven made two pictures of the procession in pen and ink, and the boys secured a photograph of the mayor. Mr. Haven went to the city and had zinc etchings made of the three. These cuts now embellished the first page of the *Herald*.

In fact, everything was ready for the first appearance of the new weekly except the paper.

This, the boys knew, had arrived on the noon train. They had awaited its delivery by the local expressman all the afternoon.

"I 'm getting fidgetty," declared Bob, as a quarter of an hour went by. "Hey, Stet!"

"Yes, sir," reported their willing young assistant, appearing from a corner case where he was distributing "pi," or mixed-up type.

"Put on your coat," directed Bob, "and hus-

tle down to the express office. Don't delay, or Mr. Stirling will be gone for the night."

"Why, you just telephoned to him," suggested Darry.

"I know I did, but I want particulars. How do we know but what some lazy expressman left our paper till the last, and has driven it to his barn to deliver in the morning."

"Oh, that would n't do at all," declared Darry, aroused at the suggestion.

"I should say not. You ask Mr. Stirling, Stet, who took the afternoon deliveries."

"I'll do it, Mr. Haven."

"And then see if you can hunt up the expressman."

The local deliveries at the express office were often given by the company to the handiest of the expressmen, who were usually stationed with their wagons in the vicinity of the railway depot.

Darry did some figuring at the desk after Stet's departure. Bob looked over some proofs.

"I say, Darry," Bob observed finally, "how about Baker Mills?"

"He wants to come with us. As manager of circulation."

"That's a pretty big term for a budding enterprise, but he's willing to take the risk. He's got money enough to buy a horse and cart, and he wants to do it. He says he will do all our job print delivery, work up a circulation and advertising in near-by towns, and make himself generally useful for a merely nominal sum until the *Herald* gets on its feet."

"All right. Stet has our promise as to the first issue, and we must n't disappoint him. Hello, what's up?"

Just then, in his usual volcanic way, Stet bolted into the office.

"Trouble," he announced breathlessly.

"How? where?" demanded Darry.

"Felt it in my bones. Tim Murphy got the express deliveries this afternoon. He has n't been seen around the town since three o'clock. He is the man who hauls the paper regularly for the *Eagle* people. He was drinking with Hemp Carson all the morning."

"Darry!" cried Bob, all aflare with suspicion in

an instant, "if Carson is up to any new trick with us—"

"Easy, Bob," directed Darry. "Go ahead, Stet—what else?"

"Why, I found out that Murphy had got pretty badly mixed up. Jeff, that's the *Eagle* office boy, went off on the wagon to help him deliver his packages."

Bob Haven jumped for his coat.

"See here, Bob," said Darry, "don't get excited. It's a suspicious connection, that's all. Murphy probably had some deliveries for the factories, and overlooked us."

"Don't believe it!" snapped Bob. It's a plot! The *Eagle* brood are trying to make us late in getting out the paper. You come with me, Stet. I'm going to locate our goods and get that paper into this establishment to-night, if we have to tote it here on our backs. Come on!"

## CHAPTER XIX

### AN HOUR OF SUSPENSE

Bob directed a speedy question to Stet as they left the printing office:

"Do you know where expressman Murphy lives?"

"That I do," answered the embryo typo promptly.

"Get there quick, then."

Stet was a sprinter. He lost no time reaching a poor quarter of the town. It was known as "The Flats." He crossed lots and cut down alleys. At length they arrived at a big barn of a house, very plain and very dilapidated.

"Tim Murphy boards here," said Stet. "I'll see if he is home."

He disappeared through the front open doorway of the house and came back in about two minutes.

"Not here," reported Stet. "This is Mrs. Maxwell's boarding house. Murphy is a bach. He only boards and rooms here. 'Not home yet,' she says."

"Then he must still be on his route," suggested Bob.

"We can soon find out."

"How?"

"He keeps his horse at Fogarty's barn."

"Where is that?"

"Only two squares away."

They reached Fogarty's just as a man was coming out of a big stable, a lantern in his hand.

"That's Fogarty," said Stet, and Bob intercepted the man as he was locking the barn door.

"Mr. Fogarty," he said, "I am looking for Tim Murphy."

"And who are you?" demanded Fogarty ungraciously.

"Bob Haven, of Haven Brothers."

"Oh, yes, I know—the printers?"

"Murphy left the express office with a bundle of paper for us," explained Bob. "It's important

that we should have it to-night, and he has n't shown up yet."

"And I reckon he won't, either," declared Fogarty, with a coarse laugh. "See here. There 's his wagon."

Fogarty pulled open the barn door. He flashed the light over one of several wagons in the big, roomy barn.

Bob peered into it searchingly. It was empty.

"And where is Murphy?" he inquired.

"Upstairs; asleep in the hay."

"I must see him," said Bob sharply.

"It won't do you any good. He 's snug. I had to carry him up. He was driven in here an hour ago by a boy. Murphy was dead to the world—I had to put up his horse. I tried to rouse him. No use. He had a half-empty bottle in his pocket. The way it smelled and the way he acted I should say it was doped."

Bob was in a positive fever of apprehension and anxiety.

"Ah," he said, stepping forward—"there is his book. Can I look at it?"

"Sure, if it will do you any good," assented Fogarty.

The book was a brass-bound loose-leaf express receipt book. It held a yellow sheet in place itemizing the deliveries taken out from the express office that afternoon.

There were some fifteen different deliveries. They ran from the hotel down town to the Novelty Works on the outskirts. Every item was tallied off with a receiving signature.

Haven Brothers came sixth. A penciled scrawl showed the pretense of a signature.

"There's crooked work here, Mr. Fogarty," said Bob—"pretty near forgery. You think we couldn't rouse up Murphy?"

"I'm sure of it."

"Then you must hitch up his horse to the wagon. There has been some *hocus pocus* about our paper. I don't believe Murphy was a willing party to it. But I've got to recover that paper. It's either you coöperating with us in trying to find it, or I shall at once have Murphy arrested.

Fogarty looked serious.

"What do you want the rig for?" he inquired.

"To go over the route Murphy took this afternoon, and see if he has n't left our package somewhere."

"All right. I'm Tim Murphy's friend, and I believe he's an honest man. The horse is fed. I'll hitch him up in a jiffy."

Five minutes later, Bob on the wagon seat, Stet by his side, they drove out of the stable.

Stet had questioned Fogarty closely while he was putting the harness on the horse.

"Drive to Jeff Slocum's house first, Mr. Haven," he suggested.

"Yes," nodded Bob. "There is no doubt that he has been the guiding spirit in this affair."

Stet directed Bob. When they turned a corner he told his companion to drive to the side of the road and wait there.

Stet walked past a row of miserable hovels till he came to Jeff's house. The door opened as he neared it. Stet jumped behind a tree.

Jeff himself had just left the house. He started on a run down the street trilling a

shrill call, apparently for chums who lived near neighbors.

As he neared the tree Stet darted out. He clutched the astonished Jeff neck and shoulder.

"I want you," he observed. "Holler, and I'll shut off your breath. You know me. No scuffling, or I'll eat you up!"

Jeff stared in terror at the adversary who had knocked him twenty feet on a recent occasion.

"W—what you want?" he stammered.

"Me—nothing. The law wants you, though, Jeff Slocum. Do you see that wagon at the corner? Well, march to it, march straight, march quick, or it's you to the reform school."

"I ain't done nothing!"

"Huh! Oh, no—only forgery, ten years. Only conspiracy, ten more. Only robbing the express company, ten more. Oh, you're an innocent guy. Huh!"

Jeff Slocum began to quake. His face was white. He was sniveling as his captor shoved him up to the wagon.

"Here he is, Mr. Haven," said Stet. "Show

him that warrant—or shall we take him to the calaboose straight, and let the sheriff serve it?"

"Oh, don't! don't!" bellowed Jeff. "I ain't done nothing!"

"See here," said Bob sternly, "you can go to jail, or you can remedy the mischief you have done. You have been engaged in a plot to get rid of the paper expressed to us."

"I ain't responsible. Hemp Carson told me—"

"We know all about Hemp Carson," interrupted Bob. "You have been with Tim Murphy all the afternoon, pretending to help him deliver the express stuff. What did you do with the Haven Brothers' package?"

# CHAPTER XX

VOL. I—NO. I

STET had urged and forced the whining culprit into the wagon box by this time. He held on to him.

"Suppose—suppose I can get it? demanded Jeff.

"I'll let you off this time," promised Bob, "and I'll try and smooth it over with the express company."

"It's up at the Novelty Works," confessed Jeff. "You can thank me."

"Yes, thank you! thank you!" mocked the vigorous Stet, ramming his fist into the neck of his captive two times in succession.

"You quit—that hurts!" brawled Jeff. "You can thank me. Hemp Carson said to get rid of it—dump it in the creek. When we delivered some other stuff at the Novelty Works, we had to

carry it into the storeroom in the basement. Murphy was helpless, and I had my own way. I took your package in, too, and slipped it behind some old barrels where it would n't be found for a long time."

They drove to the Novelty Works. It was fortunate that Bob knew the watchman. After an explanation the bundle of paper was recovered.

Bob compelled Jeff to accompany them to the printing office, where they unloaded the paper.

Then, after administering some sound advice, he made Jeff undertake to return the rig to the stable.

"I shall sleep here all night, Darry," insisted Bob. "There is too much stirring to run any risks now."

Darry waited until Bob had got his supper at a near-by restaurant. Then he went home.

Bob and Stet got the paper spread out and dampened. They were up till nearly midnight, arranging everything for the press-run in the morning.

Stet was up at daylight. He was as spry as a

cricket, cheerful as a lark. He felt that a great day had dawned for Haven Brothers.

The forms were arranged on the press, everything made ready. Stet at the crank, Bob feeding the sheets, they ran off two hundred papers by seven o'clock.

It was a sample edition, and they intended to print two thousand copies. Up to noon Darry spelled Stet at the crank that operated the power.

It was an exciting morning for the boy publishers. At twelve o'clock Mrs. Haven appeared with a warm lunch for the three ardent laborers.

She was delighted at the appearance of the paper. She helped them fold, and at three o'clock in the afternoon the long task was fully completed.

"Now then, Stet," nodded Bob, a bright glow on his face.

Stet ran out of the office. He reappeared in fifteen minutes bringing with him five boys about his own age.

He stood them in line, gave each a bundle of papers, and delivered specific instructions as to the districts they were to cover.

"I'll take the main street and the hotel, remem-

ber," he advised this little army of helpers. "Now then, practice the yell, and mebbe someday you'll be educated enough to run a daily route. All hands. 'Here's your weekly *Herald*—illustrated edition. Full account of the big procession!'"

The roof seemed to lift with the chorus.

"'Five cents a copy,'" continued Stet. "You get two cents. Off with you!"

The youthful coterie dashed forth to scatter intelligence to the four quarters of the Pleasantville world.

Mrs. Haven smiled happily. She was soon seated at the desk directing wrappers to inclose sample copies.

Long after Stet had darted out with a bundle of papers under his arm, they could hear the echo of his strenuous voice all along the main street.

People halted and stared as Stet made the air ring.

"Here, boy—give us a paper," was a common hail.

"Ten for the news stand," ordered the hotel man.

Merchants, lawyers, farmers at the curbs caught

the infection of Stet's animation. The nickels came thick and fast.

"Hi, there!"

Stet turned at the hail. He hesitated. From the doorway of the *Eagle* office Jasper Mackey, standing there with Hemp Carson, had called to him.

"Pleasantville weekly *Herald*—illustrated edition," bawled Stet, running up to them.

"Give us a paper," ordered Mackey.

"Five cents."

"Oh, we're in the profession—mark it on the exchange list."

"No graft or deadheads with the *Herald!*" shot out Stet. "Here's your *Herald*—"

"Here! here!" called Mackey, as Stet started off.

Stet grabbed his nickel, handed a paper to the *Eagle* editor, and started on with his brisk, cheering cry.

"Illustrated edition!" growled Hemp Carson. "Rot! Some old cuts, I suppose—thunder!"

He fell back dumbfounded, as his companion opened the fresh, neat sheet.

Jasper Mackey gave a gasp as his eyes roamed over the clear beautiful cuts illustrating the parade, and surrounding a fine portrait of the Mayor of Pleasantville.

"They 've done it!" choked out the editor of the *Eagle*, turning white with rage and stupefaction.

The manager of the *Eagle* Job Print let out a yell of wrath. He tore the innocent sheet to pieces. He gnashed his teeth, he executed a war dance upon the fragments in his impotent fury.

The *Herald* was out and the *Herald* was a success.

Those two marplots recognized the fact. As the leader in the new paper stated, a new era in clean, up-to-date journalism had dawned for Pleasantville.

# CHAPTER XXI

## THE YOUNG EDITOR

"I WANT to see the editor."

"That's him," said Stet, nodding towards Darry Haven.

"It was the second week of the newspaper enterprise. The printing shop was beginning to receive many visitors.

Darry turned in his chair with a welcoming smile. It faded a trifle as he recognized the caller—Colonel Harrington's man of all work.

"You the editor?" said the latter in a conscious, embarrassed way, probably recalling a former experience with Haven Brothers. "I—that is, Mrs. Harrington told me to have you print this notice of her lawn party."

"Certainly," bowed Darry, taking the written sheets presented. "We are anxious to print all the news."

"Thank you," said the man.

"Hold on," directed Darry in some dismay glancing over the sheets.

Mrs. Colonel Harrington had written the notice herself. This was probably a duplicate of what she had sent to the *Eagle*.

It was closely written and would make over a column. It was filled with allusions to the magnificent furnishings of the Harrington drawing-rooms, the Harrington genealogy, the Harrington possessions. It was Harrington, Harrington all the way through. Not a single guest was named. It was a fulsome, nauseating puff.

"I can't print this stuff," announced Darry definitely, after conning the precious screed. "It is too long, and it is not news. Why, my friend this is practically advertising matter. You had better take it back to Mrs. Harrington for revision. We will be glad to give the function the ordinary notice and print the list of guests, but this matter as a whole—regular rates, ten cents a line."

The *Eagle* prints it all right," said the man, with a flush.

"The *Eagle* is not a newspaper," called out Bob sharply from his printing case.

"Well, I was to leave it," mumbled the man. "Mrs. Harrington won't pay any ten cents a line."

"Very good," said Darry. "We will do the best we can with it, then, although we shall have to blue pencil it liberally."

"The nerve of that woman!" muttered Bob, as the man left the office.

Darry resumed his task. He was writing an editorial. His father was again on the invalid list, and Darry had to assume a double responsibility.

A tramp printer, a sober, reliable fellow, had come along and was now working for them. This enabled Bob to devote some time to reporting. They did not know, however, what moment their new typesetter might take the wandering fever again.

Considering its field the *Herald* had proven a vast success. Encouraging letters, subscriptions and advertisements came in every mail.

Baker Mills had started in at work for the

*Herald.* He had gotten several advertising contracts, and over fifty subscriptions in near-by towns.

Bart Stirling's name headed the subscription list, Mr. David Barnes's coming next.

Nothing was heard in the room for several moments after the departure of Mrs. Colonel Harrington's envoy. Finally, Darry swung around in his chair.

"See here, you fellows," he spoke, "I'm stuck on an editorial."

"And want some suggestions?" asked Bob.

"That's it."

"Say," ventured Stet, "why don't you pitch into the *Eagle* outfit?"

"No, better keep clean," dissented Bob. "Tell you, Darry, give us a strong bouncing editorial on athletics."

"Want my word?" drawled the new printer.

"We'll be thankful," said Darry.

"All right. I'll give you just the theme for a new paper: 'The Future of Pleasantville.' Set your wits at work. Enumerate all the faults that are present, the remedies, the contrast when good

citizenship clears the situation. Tell how the *Herald* is here to push and start the boom. New men, new principals—I say this, because I understand that the local political pot will soon begin to boil."

"That's so," nodded Bob—"it's on the fire already."

"When that article comes out," continued the experienced veteran, "it will just pave the way for one of the two parties to come and ask your help. I suppose you know they'll be after you."

"We are not to be bought," announced Darry proudly.

"Perhaps not, but as there is a few hundred dollars in campaign printing in the proposition, you won't suffer by taking a stand and sticking to it. Hello! Say, gents, here's trouble!"

All hands glanced through the open doorway. Coming down the cindered path was a stout, florid stranger.

His buggy was hitched at the street curb, and he coiled a big horsewhip in one hand. His lips

were set wrathfully. His whole bearing indicated determination and animosity.

"Who's the editor here?" he demanded, filling the doorway with his portly frame.

"Why," spoke Darry politely, "I represent him."

"You do!" flared out the stranger. "Very well, sir, read that!"

He pushed a printed slip cut from a newspaper into Darry's hand.

The latter read it calmly. He looked up with a slight smile. This infuriated his visitor.

"Oh, it's a laughing matter, is it?" stormed the man, slashing the rawhide furiously. "I am the person mentioned in that article. I am the 'heartless monster who nearly ran down an innocent, prattling child.'"

"Yes, sir," answered Darry—"well?"

"Well? Well, I'm going to lick the man who wrote that article. I'm going to flay him, be he black or white, big, little, old or young."

"I'd do it if I were you—the man deserves it," acknowledged Darry frankly.

"Think so, do you?" shouted the visitor. "I'm coming, Mr. Editor—"

He took a firm hold on the handle of the whip.

"Only," said Darry, "you must find your man elsewhere.

"Is n't he here?"

"No, you are in the wrong office. This is the *Herald*. That article appeared in the *Eagle*."

"Eh? ah! oh! Well, I'm not sorry. Is the editor of the *Eagle* a full-grown man?"

"He's full grown," put in Bob. "As to being a man—"

"You're right!" cried the stranger. "No man would print that libel. Thanks, my friend. I'll give you a sensational item for your next issue." And away the stranger went in a hurry.

Stet was on pins and needles to follow the stranger, whom he devoutly regarded as "an avenger."

Bob checked his ardent impulse. At noon, however, Stet was off like an arrow.

"Correct!" he chuckled, returning in fifteen minutes. "Say, that fellow nearly wrecked the

*Eagle* office. Hemp Carson butted in, and he kicked him downstairs, and Jasper Mackey—"

"What about him, Stet?" asked Bob.

"He won't walk much for a day or two, and he'll wear a patch over one eye for a week to come."

## CHAPTER XXII

### "THE SCOOP OF THE CENTURY"

"THAT'S me, sir!"

"Yes, Colonel Harrington, we know you."

Colonel Jeptha Harrington, magnate of Pleasantville, had burst into the office of the *Herald* like a cyclone.

Stet had seen him coming, and had quickly announced that the colonel was a little wobbly in his gait.

Colonel Harrington crossed the floor to the editorial desk. He dashed his card down on the desk before Darry as if it was a challenge to mortal combat.

"Oh, you know me, do you?" snarled the rich man of Pleasantville. "I fancy most people here do. I can buy and sell this town, I want you to understand, and I will brook no insults. No insults, sir!" and the colonel brought his fist down upon the table till the ink-bottles danced.

"Who has been insulting you, Colonel Harrington?" asked Darry quietly.

"You, sir—the *Herald*, sir!"

"I was n't aware of it."

"Don't you tell me!" roared the colonel. "It's spite work—mean, petty spite. There was some trouble about a bill—a little bill of Mrs. Harrington's, sir—"

"Which you paid—yes," said Bob, who had moved up, to watch the colonel's cane.

Colonel Harrington glared wrathfully at Bob.

"And you think to work it out on us. In your last issue you notice all the one-horse church sociables in the county, and give five lines—only five lines, sir! to the most important social function of the year, Mrs. Harrington's lawn party."

Darry did not reply for a moment. Bob's eyes said, "Throw him out!" Stet looked as if he would like to help. The young editor, however, realized that enemies were costly.

He politely and quietly explained to Colonel Harrington how the matter stood. They were crowded for space. Outside of that, they would allow no padding to a gratuitous notice. They

would be glad at all times to print a full list of guests at any of the Harrington social gatherings, but nothing further except as to the plain merits of the function.

It took some time, but skillful Darry finally disarmed the colonel. In fact, the magnate departed in pretty good temper.

"Put me down on your subscription list, Haven," he ordered magnificently, as he left the place.

"Now, is n't that a triumph?" demanded the politic Darry, as Colonel Harrington sailed out to the street.

"He did n't pay for the subscription, all the same," suggested Bob.

"Wait," said Stet, simply and enigmatically.

About two o'clock that keen-sighted young ferret made a startling announcement.

"Ginger!" he bolted out—"the colonel's coming back."

"Sure enough," muttered Bob, and stared hard at two companions of the august magnate.

Colonel Harrington reappeared at the editorial

desk. He was in rare good humor. The two men who were with him Darry had never seen before. They seemed strangers to Pleasantville. Darry was glad of it. They did not look like very good citizens. One of them had the shrewdest eyes he had ever seen. The other looked hangdog in every move he made.

The twain remained near the door. At them Bob stared fixidly. As he stared, he uttered under his breath:

"The mischief—I know them!"

Colonel Harrington was slopping over with good nature. He slapped Darry familiarly on the back. Then he insisted on shaking hands with him.

"Haven," he said, dropping into a chair, "I want to make a friend of the *Herald*."

"Thank you, sir," answered Darry, briefly.

"Square and plump is my motto. See? No hiding under the bed. Nothing under the hat. See?"

"A good motto," bowed Darry.

"I subscribed for your paper," continued the colonel grandly. "That's only the beginning.

I can make or break anything in Pleasantville. I'm going to make you, young man,—yes, sir, I am."

"You are very good, Colonel Harrington," said Darry modestly.

"Don't mention it. Now, see here: Did you know I was going to run for State senator?"

"Yes, sir, I heard so."

"I am. Sure victory. Got the pull—and the money. *Eagle* supports me, party unanimous. Don't want any friction. Now, look here, Haven: There's a thousand dollars contingent political fund. We're pledged to give Mackey the bulk. How about one hundred dollars for you?"

Darry straightened up, stiff as a poker.

"Do I understand," he inquired steadily, "that you offer to buy the columns of this newspaper for one hundred dollars?"

"That's it. All right, eh? Comes high, but bound to get it, eh?"

"Colonel Harrington," said Darry, springing to his feet, his eyes flashing, his hand extended towards the door, "leave this office."

"W—what!" gulped the magnate. "W—what! I subscribed for your paper, I—"

"You had better go."

"Or I'll help you!" pronounced a fog-horn voice, and the big tramp printer, sleeves rolled up, brawny arms exposed, arrived on the scene.

"You hear me?—*get!*"

He "got" the colonel to the door, and without ceremony shoved him over the threshold, preceded by his two friends, who looked very much bored.

There the colonel paused. His swelling throat nearly burst the neckband. He slashed his cane against the side of the building.

"You order me out of your miserable one-horse hovel!" he stormed. "Why, I'll buy the building and burn it up. Won't be bribed, won't help the cause, eh? I'll ruin you, I'll sweep you off the face of the earth!"

His bellowing tones had attracted attention from the street. A crowd was gathering.

"Come on, Colonel," advised his shrewd-eyed friend, taking his arm soothingly.

"I won't! Order me out—me! Why, you

half-starved idiots, I'll blot you off the map! Do you know who I am? I can buy the town. More! I'm in a scheme to make two millions."

"S—sh! For mercy's sake, Colonel, be prudent! warned the shrewd-faced man in manifest alarm. "You'll spoil everything."

"He actually put his hand across Colonel Harrington's mouth to silence him, and dragged him from the spot.

"Well," said Darry, with an attempt at jocularity as the colonel and his friends disappeared in the direction of the hotel bar, "that's another pleasant amenity of the life editorial."

"Oh, he's the limit!" cried Bob. "Support him! Would you, Darry?"

"On principle, never. For a bribe? Clean hands, Bob Haven, if we go down with a sinking ship!"

"You bet!" echoed Bob.

"Young man," said the old tramp printer quietly, "you are made of the best editorial timber I ever ran up against, and you're bound to make it a go."

The office subsided to average routine.

About four o'clock a boy came in with a telegram.

Bob did not notice it, but Stet was at a rear open window.

He was listening to a doleful story narrated by Jeff Slocum. Hemp Carson had pounded the apprentice for turning up the paper for the *Herald* and Jasper Mackey had discharged him.

Stet was handing him a quarter of a dollar to get something to eat and some fatherly advice, as Darry, tearing open the telegram, arose quite excitedly to his feet.

"Work for you, Bob!" he cried.

"What?" demanded his brother expectantly.

"Wire from Bart Stirling."

"What does he say?"

"'Send someone to me in the city at once. I have the scoop of the century for you.'"

## CHAPTER XXIII

### ON THE TRAIN

MEAN-SPIRITED Jeff had played on Stet's sympathies until he had succeeded in "borrowing" a quarter of a dollar from him.

The former *Eagle* office boy had heard Darry Haven read the telegram from Bart Stirling.

Then he had darted away, and forthwith sold to Hemp Carson the important "tip" that the *Herald* people were working on "the scoop of the century."

The news from Bart stirred up Haven Brothers more than a little. They knew the young express manager to be no alarmist. The *Herald* was almost set up. It was due to print number three within the next forty-eight hours.

"Bart never slops over," observed Bob. "When he wires to send someone in a case like this, you bet it's news."

"You must go, Bob, forthwith," said Darry.

"I'd like nothing better," returned Bob.

A train had just left for the city. There was another several hours later, but that would arrive at Rockport at midnight.

"See here, Darry," said Bob, discussing the B. & M. time schedule, "routing Bart out at midnight won't do any good. I can take the 3 A. M.; get to the city in time to find him before breakfast, and do the work by daylight, if there is any to do."

"That is the proper arrangement," assented Darry, and so it was settled.

Bob caught the three o'clock train. There were not many passengers. Only one other got on at Pleasantville. He was a bushy-bearded individual muffled up in a big rain-coat, and took the smoker.

Bob enjoyed his novel "night hawk" experience. It was quite a sensation to feel himself on the track of news in the "wee, small hours."

He had something to think of, too. Bob, as has been indicated, had recognized Colonel Harrington's companions of the day previous.

"They were certainly the two men who chased

Percy St. Clair the night he gave me that mysterious satchel to drop in the old well at Parker's Pasture," soliloquized Bob.

This opened up a whole train of perplexing thought. That these two men were scamps, Bob did not doubt. The fact was plainly written on their faces.

Bob wondered how they came to be so thick with Colonel Harrington. He recalled, too, how the shrewd-faced man had silenced the magnate while the latter was prattling bombastically about a large sum of money.

"There's something doing with that crowd," reflected Bob. "I wonder if Percy St. Clair can give the clew."

At six o'clock in the morning Bob reached Bart Stirling's boarding house at Rockport.

The young express manager invited him to breakfast. When they returned to his room, Bart said:

"I got onto a big thing yesterday, Bob—a big thing for Pleasantville."

"And, therefore, for the *Herald*."

"Exactly. It is this: A new railroad will

cross the B. & M. at Pleasantville inside of four months."

"I have heard something about that," said Bob, "but it was all vague—in the air only."

"Well, the route has been decided on. Look here."

Bart spread out on the table a section of a printed railway map taking in Pleasantville.

In broad ink lines there was traced the route of the new railroad.

Then Bart exhibited a neat cut of a railway depot.

"That is the model of the stations they are going to build," explained Bart. "All this I am sure of."

"Why," said Bob with energy, "I will hustle these right over to the electrotypers and get zinc etchings made."

"The very thing! Then take this note to its address—Mr. E. G. Lanyon. He is secretary of our express company, and my friend. I told him about your paper. He will put you on to full particulars about the new road."

"I tell you this is a big scoop, if the *Eagle* don't hear of it," said Bob.

"Oh, they are asleep," answered Bart. "You see, the railroad is no news here. Everybody knows about it. But to get details as to its route through Pleasantville, for you to give it out first, think what that means to the town property holders."

"Bart, you have done us a big service."

"Then I am glad."

That was a busy day for Bob. He went first to the electrotypers. It would take them until four o'clock to photograph the map and depot pictures, make zinc etchings and mount them on wood ready to print.

Then Bob went and saw Mr. Lanyon. He found him to be a delightful man. He went with Bob to the office of the railway engineer. He obtained permission for Bob to look over the surveys of the new road, and Bob "took notes."

By noon, Bob's head was fairly bursting with all the information he had attained.

He was keenly excited and gratified. He could picture in imagination the splendid four-column illustrated article on the new railroad. He could

fancy the interest and satisfaction it would create among business men.

He could realize the consternation of the dull and dreary *Eagle*. It was, indeed, "the scoop of the century"—for Pleasantville.

Bob casually noticed on the depot platform the same bushy-whiskered individual who had been a passenger early that morning.

This man went into the smoker. Bob, engrossed with active, pleasing anticipation, thought no more of him.

Just as dusk came on, Bob restlessly strolled out to the rear platform of the passenger coach.

The train had slowed up while traversing a stretch of track under repair.

Bob got to the lower step to view the extent of the improvement. It would make a little news note for the next issue of the *Herald*.

Without a warning, so quick that he could not save himself, Bob felt a hand shove him between the shoulders.

"Jump!" spoke a hasty voice.

Bob was pushed free of the step. He went down through the air six feet, and landed ankle-

HE GRABBED THE YOUNG PUBLISHER BY THE ARM.—*Page 217.*

deep in a muddy ditch by the side of the track.

Ker—chump, splash—directly on his heels his assailant followed him, landing almost by his side.

The last coach drifted by. The astonished Bob stared after the disappearing train and then at the man who had jumped after him.

The latter made a quick, wading dart towards Bob, and grabbed his arm.

Bob saw dimly a bushy-bearded face, a raincoat collar nearly hiding it.

"Hands off! who are you?" cried the indignant Bob.

"Got you!" proclaimed a gloating voice.

Bob recognized the tones with a thrill.

His assailant and companion was Hemp Carson.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### IN THE TOILS

Bob considered Hemp Carson equal to any act of villainy, but he was never more astonished in his life.

His feet were mired, and he could not easily get them free. Carson had him in a iron grasp.

He was alone, in the power of the scheming scoundrel, between stations on a desolate, deserted stretch of tracks.

"You pushed me—" flared out Bob.

"I did," chuckled Carson. "I followed you from Pleasantville, lost you at Rockport, caught you up again at the depot, and here we are."

"How dared you—" again began Bob.

"Oh, no harm done," scoffed Carson. "I planned not to hurt you. Only a little mud and wet. All fair in business, you know."

"What do you want of me?" demanded Bob stormily.

"Haven," said Hemp coolly, "I want that scoop!"

Bob gave a start. Only now did he probe the motive of his secret pursuit and present predicament.

"What scoop?" he asked in a husky tone.

"'The scoop of the century,'" quoted Carson with a gleesome laugh. "Oh, we're weasels, we are—we're ferrets."

Bob collected his nerve. He surmised from Carson's phrase that he was aware of the wording of Bart Stirling's telegram. How much of the real merits of the scoop was Carson advised of?

"You think we've got a scoop, do you?" said Bob.

"Know it."

"What's the scoop about?"

"You tell. In fact, Haven, you will tell. Confess the truth, give me the details, divide the honors with the *Eagle* here and now, and we'll go back to Pleasantville like two brothers, and no harm done."

"And otherwise?" challenged Bob.

"Why," said Carson with a harsh laugh, tighten-

ing his powerful grip on his captive, "then you come with me. Half a mile down the road there lives a particular friend of mine. I'll take you there, and search you."

"Supposing you find nothing?" suggested Bob.

"Then it's you to a quiet and cozy attic till the *Herald* comes out and we're mortal sure you haven't scooped us."

Bob had in his outside coat pocket the two electrotypes. In an inside pocket were his notes on the new railroad.

Once Carson should discover them, all would be lost. Bob aimed only to put off a search.

Carson had dragged himself and his captive up the bank of the ditch and into a country road that paralleled the railroad tracks.

"Go ahead," said Bob finally.

"Go ahead—where?" demanded Hemp.

"Where you like. I won't talk. Bring on your friend, and your attic."

"I don't get the scoop?"

"Never, on your life!"

"We'll see."

Carson made sure of his grip. Bob had no chance in his powerful grasp.

The lad was forced along the road. The moon had come out. Glancing down the winding road about twenty rods, Bob made out a farmhouse standing somewhat back from the highway.

"Is that your friend's place?" inquired Bob.

"It is," gruffly answered Carson.

"You give me until we reach it to decide for keeps?"

"You 've hit it correct, young man."

"I'll think," said Bob.

"You know how to, when you want to. No tricks, though. See here."

Carson with his free hand pulled out a revolver.

"Well! well!" jeered Bob. "You 'll be fighting with cannon in the streets of Pleasantville, next."

"It 's a desperate case—" began Carson.

"I learn so," interrupted Bob. "Someone told us you had to put a chattel mortgage on your plant and ask an extension on your paper notes."

"Shut up!" growled Carson, giving Bob a savage jerk.

Bob uttered a sharp cry. It was play-actor business, but he did it well.

He feigned to stumble over a bowlder in the road, and limped.

"Well, keep a civil tongue in your head, then!" growled his brutal captor.

Bob muttered something in a snivelling tone. He pretended to be all broken up. Carson chuckled, thinking the boy's nerve was deserting him, and that he would soon give in.

They reached the gate of the farmhouse. The dwelling was lighted up, and two girls and their swains were on the distant porch.

"Company!" growled Carson disgustedly—"well, we can go in the back way. Here, what's the matter with you?"

Bob bad wilted. He hung a heavy weight in his captor's grasp.

"This is pretty near deadly assault!" he sniffled.

"Then give in," suggested Carson eagerly. "Now rest a minute."

Bob sank to a big stone at the side of the gate.

Carson still held on to his arm, but thrown off his guard, he had somewhat relaxed the tenacity of his grip.

Bob's eyes were everywhere, though Carson never surmised it. While coming down the road Bob had deftly transferred the plates and his notes to his trousers pockets.

"You let go my arm!" wailed Bob. "It's black and blue."

Carson shifted his grasp to the collar of Bob's coat."

"Give in, Haven," he said. "Come, you're bested, and there's no use squirming. I'll get some liniment to fix your bruises, and I'll pay for the damage to your clothes. Hi! thunder! stop him!"

The wheedling tones grew into a great bellow of consternation and affright.

The captive had slipped the traces. One well-timed wiggle, and Bob Haven was free, leaving his coat in the grip of the astounded Hemp Carson.

With a bound Bob cleared the fence. He ran thirty feet to an old tree stump. On this he

had fixed his eye ever since he had reached the gate.

Against it rested a bicycle. It probably belonged to one of the young swains on the porch.

Bob seized its handles, ran it across the garden, lifted it over the fence and sprang after it.

Hemp Carson had followed him inside the garden. Now he ran at the fence. He was too bulky to run fast. As he dropped on the other side, he came erect agape.

Spinning down the moonlit road a silver-gleaming thing of beauty, the bicycle was bearing away to Pleasantville the dauntless young reporter who dexterously saved his "scoop of the century."

## CHAPTER XXV

### TRUE TO THE LINE!

"Bob, it's coming our way!"

"In carriages, Darry! Do I fill out the contract?"

"You are a genius, Bob Haven—I say it, if you are my brother."

"I'm glad to be your brother!"

"Throwing bouquets!" piped in the indulged and volatile Stet. "Well, that's better than up at the *Eagle* office. They don't throw anything there but mallets. All the same, we're it— Oh, yes, the *Herald* is It!"

It was an animated scene—a fit climax to a series of remarkable successes on the part of the new weekly newspaper.

The railroad scoop had been the talk of the town. Taken in connection with the *Herald's* optimistic editorials, it woke up Pleasantville as the

place had not been stimulated since the B. & M. first came through.

Haven Brothers received all kinds of compliments. Business came in brisk. The little printing office presented a rare haven of industry, prosperity and peace.

"I'm stuck on you fellows," observed Jim Dunlap, the tramp printer, that afternoon. "And this is the top-notch climax. Mr. Bob Haven, you'll do, very decidedly!"

As Dunlap spoke he fixed his admiring glance on the press.

That article of machinery was running off the regular edition. It was performing that work, however, in a strikingly unique fashion.

Bob had been hinting at making a sensation for some days. Now the culmination of his project had come.

The original young typo had devised a scheme. He had got a carpenter to assist him secretly.

The artisan had constructed a wheel of wood, inclosed with netting and having inside cleats.

The crank lever had been removed from the press. A belt was run to the wooden wheel.

And now, inside the wheel, squirrel-fashion, treadmill action, Christmas, the big office dog, was placidly, enjoyably supplying the power to run the press.

"I knew it would work," declared the delighted Bob.

Somehow, word got out around town of something new stirring up at the *Herald* office.

By the time two hundred papers were run off, twenty gaping, curious spectators crowded the room.

Before the run was ended, half the town seemed filling the doorway or staring in at the windows.

People chuckled and laughed at the novelty of the idea. But faithful old Christmas did the work, and they applauded as well.

"Don't you see," said Bob to his brother that evening, as they walked homewards, "it advertises us big. I'm going to do lots of things, Darry, to keep the *Herald* prominent in the public eye. Next week I'll have Captain Bartlett's man back his automobile outside. We'll clog the wheels, attach a belt to the running gear, and toss off the *Herald* with a new sensation. See?"

Captain Bartlett was the rival candidate against Colonel Harrington for the State senatorship.

He had a decided interest in the *Herald*, for all his political hopes hinged on the success of its endeavors.

He represented the clean reform element of Pleasantville. A few evenings previous, accompanied by some of the representative citizens, he had called at the Haven home.

Darry and Bob were at the consultation, but rightly allowed their father to assume the initiative.

The reform people would not truckle with the *Eagle*. They needed an exponent. The Havens were in complete sympathy with the correct principles which Captain Bartlett represented.

In the next issue, therefore, the *Herald* would announce its unqualified support of the new candidate.

"It means a big thing for us if we pull the captain through," Bob had importantly announced. "They want lots of printing, but that's business. If he beats Colonel Harrington, Darry, why won't we become the official newspaper of the county?"

The rivalry between the *Herald* and the *Eagle* had now become very bitter. It was earnest on the part of the Havens, malignant with Jasper Mackey and his cohort, Hemp Carson.

The latter fell to deriding and abusing "the measly kids who ran the baby sheet down the alley."

They lauded Colonel Harrington. In fact, all their hopes now centred on that magnate. People said that were the colonel defeated it meant Jasper Mackey's ruin, for the *Eagle* had risked everything on the impending election.

They printed malicious slanders about Captain Bartlett, and in so doing antagonized all the better class of business men.

With all this, it may be assumed that Darry and Bob had undertaken no light responsibilities.

The question of finances had become an easy problem after the second issue of the *Herald*.

Baker Mills brought in new business every day. The job work had so increased that they had to purchase a new press.

It was hustling times down at the old shop.

They had a telephone at the office, and had a connection at the house.

The local telephone company had given them an advertisement and they had to take it out in service.

About ten o'clock one evening, as the boys were about to retire, there came a sharp call from the telephone bell.

Bob went to the instrument.

"Who is it?" he asked.

"The office," Stet answered in a startling voice. "Get down here, quick! The hotel is burning up!"

## CHAPTER XXVI

### A HERO FROM THE DEPTHS

As Darry and Bob came out of the house a great glare showed in the eastern sky.

"It looks bad," spoke the former quickly, and both broke into a run.

By the time they had reached the main thoroughfare, the fire bells were clanging a general alarm. The streets were beginning to fill with people. Ahead of them, the fire department was hastening to a great patch of flame.

"It 's the hotel, sure enough!" breathed Bob.

Darry's first thought was of the journalistic aspect of the affair.

"Come to the office in exactly an hour, Bob," he said, as there was danger of their becoming separated in the increasing crowd.

"Yes, it looks as though there was big work for us to-night," responded Bob.

Bob was soon in front of the hotel. One glance showed him that the building was doomed.

It was a four-story building, faced with brick. The second and third floors seemed to confine a seething caldron of fire.

The hotel attaches were saving what belongings they could from the office floor. The firemen had already two streams directed upon the burning building.

Guests, some of them half-dressed, passed through the crowds. Bob met Baker Mills carrying a fainting woman in his arms.

"All out safe?" he asked hurriedly.

"No!" panted Mills, white-faced and excited. "There's twenty people hemmed in on the top story."

At that moment the second floor dropped from the rotunda supports.

This shut off all further entrance from the front.

Bob ran around to the alley at the rear of the hotel.

The firemen were vainly endeavoring to hoist their ladders. They reached only to the third

story, and here the outshooting flames ignited the ladders at a touch.

"Look! look!" yelled voices in the crowd.

A cheer followed. Bob witnessed the most exciting spectacle of his life.

From a window on the fourth floor there was suddenly dropped over the fourteen-foot alley space a great plank.

It crashed in the window on the corresponding floor of the office building opposite.

Then from the hotel window a woman's form crept across the plank. Another followed.

Bob made a dash for the next street. He knew the interior of the office building perfectly.

He was up three dark stairways in rapid jumps. He ran to the rear and threw up a window. A glance gave him his bearings.

Recklessly kicking in a locked door, Bob found himself in the room at one end of the improvised fire escape.

Two women and a girl, just come across the plank, crouched against the wall, overwhelmed with their frightful experience.

Bob ran to the window. A boy was creeping

over the plank. He was followed by one of the hotel chambermaids.

Bob pulled the boy to safety. He grasped the woman just as her strength was giving out and she was toppling over the edge of the plank. More people followed.

As the smoke momentarily lifted, Bob Haven thrilled.

He recognized the directing spirit at the other end. It was Percy St. Clair. He had just lifted a woman to the plank. She clutched it with wavering hands. Midway she crept. Then with an awful scream she fell flat, fainting dead away.

Bob crept out. He managed to drag her to safety to clear the way for three others.

The fire suddenly burst out from the windows of the third story beneath.

"St. Clair!" shouted Bob across the lurid space. "Be quick, you have no more time to lose."

"One more!" panted St. Clair.

He started across the plank upright. He carried in his arms a girl rendered unconscious by the smoke.

As Bob took her from St. Clair's arms, he dropped her to the floor and grasped the brave rescuer in a tight hug.

"You did all that," he cried enthusiastically. "Fourteen!"

"You helped," quietly answered St. Clair.

He was rubbing his eyes. Bob in dismay noticed that his hands were raw and bleeding.

"Scorched a trifle," laughed St. Clair in his usual bored way. "We must get these people somewhere else. This building may go next."

At that moment, armed with picks and axes, several firemen rushed into the room.

They began to assist in directing and removing the rescued hotel help.

Just then, the woman whom Bob had saved in mid-air from the safety plank returned to consciousness with a violent scream.

She glared around in a frenzied way. Then she ran to the window and attempted to crawl out on the plank.

"My baby!" she shrieked. "You have not saved it—my child! my child!"

Bob detained her. St. Clair faced her promptly.

"Quick!" he said—"which room?"

"The second down the hall. Oh, let me go! I must save her."

"Hold her, Haven."

Percy St. Clair sprang out on the plank.

"Come back! Are you crazy?" yelled a fireman. "The plank is smoking, the top floor has caught."

He reached out after St. Clair with his pike. It caught in the rescuer's coat sleeve.

"Let go," said St. Clair coolly, and gave a jerk that ripped his arm bare.

"He's doomed!" gasped the fireman, staring aghast at the window.

Bob was appalled. St. Clair seemed to be swallowed up in a vortex of flame beyond the hotel window.

There was a moment of frightful suspense.

"He's made it!" shouted the fireman.

Percy St. Clair, wreathed in flames, a bundle in a shawl in his arms, appeared at the fire-fringed window.

"Someone—quick!" he gasped.

He fell forward against the plank on his face,

HE GRASPED ST. CLAIR UNDER THE ARMS.—*Page 237.*

the shawled bundle his hands held upon its surface.

Bob was out on the plank in a flash.

"After me!" he directed the fireman. It will need two."

His clothing was singed, a fiery blast nearly overcame him. Bob succeeded, however, in grasping the child wrapped in the shawl.

He passed it backwards to the fireman and grasped St. Clair under the arms.

The intrepid saver of fifteen lives was a dead weight.

It was only after the most arduous efforts that Bob got him over the plank to safety.

Percy St. Clair lay white and still. They had to beat out his clothing, which was on fire.

The fireman leaned over him—he looked grave and shook his head.

"He was a true hero," he said solemnly—"and it looks as if he had given his life for others!"

# CHAPTER XXVII

## CONCLUSION

The Pleasantville *Weekly Herald* came out twenty-four hours ahead of time, and two days in advance of the *Eagle* with the full account of the hotel fire.

Bob, Stet and the old tramp printer had worked all night at the types, while Darry sat turning out copy.

Not a life had been lost in the fire, but the event was a momentous one for Pleasantville.

Besides that, the magnificent heroism of Percy St. Clair had thrilled the public soul to the utmost.

Darry seemed to be inspired, as, after hearing Bob's story, he sat down to write up the fire.

Old timers said later that never had journalistic Pleasantville signalized itself, as in the *Herald's* report of the great event in their little world.

The account began with one strikingly impressive sentence:

"A Hero Lies Dying At the Town Hospital!"

There followed that which made tender-hearted woman weep and all humanity pitiful.

It was a simple, pathetic story of a seeming "good for naught," who might have readily walked to perfect safety from his second-floor hotel apartments.

Instead, learning of the fire-imprisoned refugees on the top floor, he had gained that fourth story by way of an outside balcony.

Percy St. Clair had devised the impromptu fire escape, he had saved fifteen precious human lives.

And, as if to make the story more pathetic, they had found, snuggling in his vest, a beautiful little white kitten he had paused to snatch up from the devouring flames while his own life hung in balance.

"He was a hero," said the *Herald*, and all Pleasantville echoed the sentiment.

"He was grand!" said Bob Haven, almost reverently. "I knew him best of anyone here.

Knew him? no! for I thought him a worthless, selfish being. But now—"

"He was good to me," murmured little Stet sorrowfully. "He may have been a keen one, selling Zebra dogs and empty trick boxes—but he was good to me, he was!"

A strange thing had happened in connection with Percy St. Clair.

Bob had gone to the hospital, whither St. Clair had been conveyed, twice each day since the fire.

The physicians reported St. Clair in a dangerous fever, and believed him dying.

One of the physicians handed Bob a worn, half-burned letter the second day.

"We found it sewed up in an inner vest pocket," he told Bob. "As his nearest friend, I turn it over to you."

The superscription on the time-worn envelope was undecipherable.

The inclosure was blurred and burned. All Bob could make out, written in a delicate feminine hand, was: "My Dear Son, Frank," and a signature: "From Your Loving Mother, Celia Ismond."

"That must be his right name—Frank Ismond," said Darry, when Bob reported the discovery at the office.

The old tramp printer looked interested. He thought for awhile. Then he said:

"Haven Brothers, I've been trying to remember. I am sure that about five years ago there was a wealthy family named Ismond living at Greenville. That's about five hundred miles from here. I faintly recall, when I worked on the newspaper there, setting up some real estate transaction that a certain Celia Ismond figured in."

"We'll take a chance, anyway," said Bob.

So he wrote to Mrs. Celia Ismond, Greenville, a brief note, telling of the letter and inclosing a clipping of the fire.

Bob entered the office three mornings later a little earlier than usual, to find a lady, deeply veiled, seated there.

Stet had admitted her, and she had just arrived on the morning train.

"Is this Mr. Haven?" she said, lifting her veil and disclosing a beautiful but careworn face.

"Yes, Madam," said Bob wonderingly.

"I am Mrs. Celia Ismond, Mr. Haven. I have come to you as my boy's nearest friend here. Will you take me to him at once?"

Bob took Mrs. Ismond to the hospital. He introduced her to the physician in charge, very glad at heart that he had been instrumental in bringing mother and son together.

That afternoon Mrs. Ismond returned to the printing office. She was trembling with mingled suspense and hope.

The hospital people had detected a favorable change in their patient that morning.

She narrated a brief, strange story to Bob. Percy St. Clair's right name was Frank Newton, a child by her first husband.

About five years prior to the present time she had married a widower named Ismond. He turned out to be a cruel tyrant. He hated Walter, broke his proud spirit, charged the boy falsely with stealing, and Walter ran away from home.

Mrs. Ismond had never seen Walter since then until the present time. Once she had written him but had received no reply.

"He was never a bad boy," she asserted between sobs and tears, "but Mr. Ismond, now dead, drove all the good out of him, making him vengeful, reckless and desperate."

"Madam," said Bob Haven promptly, pointing to the paper containing the account of the fire, "that tells how proud Pleasantville is of your son!"

"I hope he is reserved for some great good in the world," murmured Mrs. Ismond fervently.

The widow's prayer was answered. Frank Newton got well.

It was a lovely afternoon when Bob went over to the hospital to find his friend sitting at an open window in an armchair.

"Well, we shall drop you, young man," said Bob playfully, "with a convalescent notice in the *Herald*."

"All right," nodded Frank Newton brightly. "Haven, did you people write that?"

He pointed to the account of the fire he had seen for the first time that day.

"My brother Darry did," said Bob.

"Is that the way people regard me?" persisted Frank Newton in a surprised tone.

"They love and esteem you as a true hero!" declared Bob earnestly.

Frank Newton dropped his face on his hands for a moment. When he looked up it was wet with tears.

"Haven," he said brokenly, "I won't hash up the past; it was bad. I was reckless, discouraged. But I never went back on a friend, and I took delight in fleecing men of the Ismond stamp. It's past now, my mother wants me to go home; I'm going, I'm going to make amends. And there," and his poor thin hand shook as he lifted the *Herald*, "there you have given me my start. It is my certificate of good conduct—God bless you!"

There was a solemn silence for some moments. Finally Bob spoke.

"Newton," he said, "I would like to ask you a question."

"Yes, what is it?"

"About the first night I met you."

"At Parker's Pasture!"

"The night you gave me that mysterious satchel. Well, the two men who chased you are now in town."

"Is that so?" murmured Frank Newton, his eyes opening wider.

"Yes, they are hand and glove with Colonel Harrington. They are also helping him in his political campaign."

The intelligence seemed to disturb Frank Newton. He was very thoughtful for some moments. Finally he said:

"I'll tell you something, Haven. I was in the hands of a regular crowd of sharpers when I came here. I was a good penman, and they hired me to get up some letters. These pretended to be from a Spanish convict who had several millions in treasure buried in Spain. If some kind-hearted gentleman would advance a few thousand dollars to send agents to Spain, he could share the fortune, besides getting a patent of nobility. It was an open-faced swindle."

"And the satchel?"

"Contained these documents. These two men came to Pleasantville to fleece Colonel Harring-

ton. I had a row with them, got ashamed of my part in it, and left them. The documents you disposed of, as you know. I have no doubt but that they are working the same game on the colonel with new papers prepared by someone else. I don't care much for Colonel Harrington, but you can warn him if you want to."

Bob did so. It seemed to break up the coterie, for the two sharpers disappeared from Pleasantville a day or two later.

The colonel did not particularly thank Bob, however. He was thinking of little at present excepting the impending election.

It may be added here that Frank Newton was true to his resolve to lead a better life. He went home for awhile and then came back to Pleasantville, to start in business for himself, and what he did I shall tell in another volume, to be called, "Mail Order Frank; Or, A Smart Boy and His Chances." In that volume I shall also have something more to tell about the Haven boys and their friend, Bart Stirling, and several others who have graced these pages.

The political conflict was now at its height.

Election day arrived. On that day Haven Brothers distinguished themselves by a manœuvre that was designated by old timers as "the slickest piece of work ever done in the county."

As a result of two nights' hard work, every voter in the county found at his door before seven o'clock a copy of *Herald* "Extra."

It was a clean, neat, elegant sheet. Its matter was interesting, convincing and truthful.

Captain Bartlett came into the *Herald* office at noon that day. He clapped Darry on the shoulder buoyantly.

"Young man," he pronounced confidently, "you have won us the day."

At three o'clock young Stet, who had been assisting Baker Mills distributing dodgers, stuck his head in at a side window.

"It 's all over but the shouting!" he declared—"Bartlett, two to one!"

At five o'clock Stet gathered a group of youthful adherents, and they piled the curb in front of the *Herald* office high with tar barrels.

"You have great faith in Captain Bartlett, Stet," observed the smiling Bob.

"No, I have great faith in the *Herald*. You fellows have carried this election. Say, Colonel Harrington has given up, they say. Had a fearful row with the *Eagle* people. He owes them a lot of money, won't pay it if he is n't elected, and they say the *Eagle* will go bankrupt."

At six o'clock the returns were all in—Bartlett 9,311 votes, Harrington 4,208.

One minute later the yelling, delirious Stet applied the match to the grand bonfire.

Its bright rays illuminated a new bulletin board in front of the *Herald* office, announcing the result of the election.

A gay band came swinging down the street. It paused in front of the printing office.

A cheer went up from the immense crowd, as Darry and Bob Haven modestly bowed the acknowledgment of the compliment.

The *Herald* had come to stay—Haven Brothers had won the fight!

Bart Stirling, just arrived from the city, came upon the scene as a carriage, gaily decorated, drove past the big bonfire.

The vehicle contained three men, the mayor of

the town, Mr. Stirling, and the successful candidate, Captain Bartlett.

"Speech! Speech! yelled the crowd.

Captain Bartlett arose, bareheaded, happy and smiling.

"Fellow citizens," he said, "I will save my speeches for the senatorial chamber, where I hope my voice will always be lifted in the interests of the law, order and reform party that has elected me to this high honor. For the present, let me utter a sentiment which I know you will all echo: Three cheers for the *Herald* and its Two Boy Publishers!"

And cheers were given with a will.

THE END

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